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DISCOURSES
ON
SEVERAL SUBJECTS
AND
OCCASIONS.

By GEORGE HORNE, D. D.

LATE BISHOP OF NORWICH,
AND PRESIDENT OF MAGDALEN COLLEGE, OXFORD.

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SOME ACCOUNT OF THE AUTHOR.

VOLUME FIRST.

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SOME
ACCOUNT
OF
BISHOP HORNE.

BISHOP HORNE, a prelate, distinguished by many excellent theological writings, was born in the year 1731, being the son of the Rev. Samuel Horne, rector of Otham, in Kent, by whom he was instructed in the first rudiments of learning. Being sent to Magdalene College in Oxford, he was made Master of Arts in 1752, and was chosen President of his College in 1768. About this time, he married the daughter of Philip Burton, Esq. of Eltham in Kent. He successively took the degrees of Bachelor and Dr in Divinity, and was appointed Chaplain in Ordinary to his Majesty. In 1776, he was chosen Vice Chancellor of the University of Oxford, and continued in that office four years. In 1781, he was preferred to the deanry of Canterbury; and, in 1789, succeeded Dr Bagot in the see of Norwich, on his translation to that of St Asaph. He died on the 17th of January 1792, in the sixty-second year of his age. His faculties continued with him to the last; and he may be truly said to have died 'the death of the Righteous.' His mind was not only remarkably pleasant as his end drew near, but even lively and pleasant. When

he had received the sacrament from the hands of his chaplain, he said he felt himself blessed and happy. To each individual of his family, he gave his benediction; bidding them go, and do all the good in their power. He expired without a groan, in the same heavenly tranquillity in which he lived; and he might have truly said, as the illustrious Addison did in his dying moments, 'See, in what peace a Christian can die.'—He was interred in the family-vault of his father-in-law at Eltham. He left three daughters, the eldest of whom is married to the Rev. Selby Hele.

Beside several single sermons, Dr Horne published, in 1769, 'Considerations on the Life and Death of St John the Baptist,' in 12mo. This was intended for the younger students in theology, and contains many pious and practical reflections. In 1776 he published in 2 vols 4to, 'A Commentary on the Book of Psalms; in which the literal, or historical Sense, as they relate to King David, and the People of Israel, is illustrated, and their Application to Messiah, to the Church, and to Individuals, as Members thereof, is pointed out.' It was afterwards published in two volumes 8vo.—This publication has great merit, not only as it recommends to our attentive regard an important part of the sacred writings, but as it illustrates them, and presents to our view a great number of pleasing, solid, and edifying reflections. Piety, indeed, appears to have been a predominant trait in the character of Dr Horne, and to have been productive to himself of that felicity and enjoyment which the world cannot give. Thus, speaking of the satisfaction he had found in composing this work, he says, 'Could the author flatter himself, that any one would have
half

BISHOP HORNE.

half the pleasure in reading the following exposition, which he hath had in writing it, he would not fear the loss of his labour. The employment detached him from the bustle and hurry of life, the din of politics, and the noise of folly: vanity and vexation flew away for a season; care and disquietude came not near his dwelling. He arose, fresh as the morning, to his task; the silence of the night invited him to pursue it; and he can truly say, that food and rest were not preferred before it. Every psalm improved infinitely on his acquaintance with it, and no one gave him uneasiness but the last; for then he grieved that his work was done. Happier hours than these which have been spent in these meditations on the songs of Sion, he never expected to see in this world. Very pleasantly did they pass, and move smoothly and swiftly along; for, when thus engaged, he counted no time. They are gone, but have left a relish and a fragrance on the mind, and the remembrance of them is sweet.' In 1777, he published 'A Letter to Adam Smith, LL. D. on the Life, Death, and Philosophy of his Friend David Hume, Esq.' In this he points out the pernicious tendency of that philosopher's writings, and the folly of his assumed levity in the article of Death, in a strain of argument, sometimes serious and sometimes pleasant. In 1779, he first published, in 2 vols 8vo. The DISCOURSES now offered to the public. In these, he appears to have conformed to the advice of the excellent Fenelon, in his 'Dialogues on the Eloquence of the Pulpit,' that preachers would pay an attentive and principal regard to the Scriptures, and endeavour to impress and influence their hearers by the several considerations that are to be

thence drawn. Bp. Horne, accordingly, addresses himself more to the heart than is commonly done, in the present day, by our argumentative preachers; and, consequently, his discourses are more calculated to answer the end of preaching than others, which might, perhaps, be considered as superior in style and composition; although, even in this inferior respect, these sermons are far from being deficient. His sentiments throughout, although he enters into no controversial points, appear to be what is generally termed orthodox.—In 1784, he published, in 12mo, ‘Letters on Infidelity.’ These letters contain strictures on the nature, tendency, principles, and reasonings of some modern productions on the side of infidelity. They are well calculated to suit the taste and turn of the present age, which is not fond of long and elaborate dissertations on religious subjects; being written in a concise, lively, and entertaining manner, and with a due mixture of serious argument, good humour, and pleasantry. The opinions of Hume, Voltaire, and other modern infidels, he often combats, very successfully, in their own way, by placing their arguments in a ludicrous point of view, and turning the laugh against themselves. As a specimen of his serious reasoning, we shall quote what he says in answer to the boast of Mr Hume’s friends, that ‘few of the professors of Christianity ever equalled him in morality, humanity, and the government of their passions.’—To this Bp. Horne answers very justly and sensibly: ‘Thousands in the first ages of the gospel, gave all their goods to feed the poor; renounced, in deed as well as word, the world and the flesh; and joyfully met death, in its most horrid forms, for the love of their Redeemer. On the

the same principle, unnumbered multitudes, in every succeeding age, have manfully sustained the heaviest calamities of human life, and with faith unfeigned, and hope that maketh not ashamed, yielded up their souls into the hands of their Creator. Scenes of this kind are daily and hourly passing in the chambers of the sick and dying, as they, whose office it is to visit those chambers, well know. To others they must remain unknown, for want of biographers to record them. Every Christian that lives in piety and charity, does not favour the public with "*His own life*." Every Christian who expires in peace and hope, has not the happiness of a Dr Smith to pen the story of his own death.'—In 1787, Bp. Horne published a Visitation Sermon, entitled, 'The Duty of contending for the Faith;' to which is subjoined, 'A Discourse on the Trinity in Unity.'—In these two Discourses he zealously maintained the Athanasian doctrine, as adopted by the church of England, and consequently drew upon himself the animadversions of an equally zealous champion on the opposite side of the question, Dr Priestly, in a pamphlet entitled, Letters to Dr Horne, Dean of Canterbury; to the young Men who are in a course of Education for the Christian Ministry at the University of Oxford and Cambridge; to Dr Price; and to Mr Parkhurst, on the Subject of the Person of Christ.—Bp. Horne's last publication was, 'Charity recommended on its true motive: a sermon, preached in the church of St George the Martyr, Bloomsbury, before the Governors of the benevolent institution for the delivery of poor married women at their own habitations, on Sunday, March 30th, 1788.'—

In this sermon our truly benevolent divine distinguishes charity from vain, ostentatious donation,
and

and from those *fine* feelings which, in some persons, prompt a kind of *instinctive* benevolence. This, he observes, is not Christian charity, which has a *religious* motive for* its object. 'If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another;' * a motive at once rational, pure, and permanent.

* The Text, 1 John iv. 11.

PREFACE.

P R E F A C E.

HAVING been prevented, for a time, by the discharge of a laborious, but highly honourable office, from performing the more immediate duties of my profession, I was yet desirous, that I might not seem to lose the clergyman in the magistrate, of still continuing to do something towards promoting the great end and purpose of life. And though the frequent returns of business gave little hopes of composing fresh discourses, its intervals, I thought, might suffice to digest and publish some, which had been already composed.

This form of publication is generally supposed less advantageous, at present, than any other. But it may be questioned, whether the supposition does justice to the age, when we consider only the respect which has so recently been paid to the sermons of the learned and elegant Dr BLAIR. And greater respect cannot be paid them, than they deserve.

The multitude of old sermons affords no argument against the publication of new ones; since new ones will be read, when old ones are neglected; and almost all mankind are, in this respect, *Athenians*.

Besides, there is a *taste* in moral and religious, as well as in other compositions, which varies in different ages, and may very lawfully and innocently be indulged. Thousands received instruction and consolation formerly from sermons, which would not now be endured. The preachers of them served their generation, and are blessed for evermore. But because provision was made for the wants of the last century in one way, there is no reason

reason why it should not be made for the wants of this, in another. The next will behold a set of writers of a fashion suited to it, when our discourses shall, in their turn, be antiquated and forgotten among men; though, if any good be wrought by them in this their day, our hope is, with that of faithful Nehemiah, that our God will remember us concerning them!

But as the productions of every author, who adds to the number, are expected to contain something new, either in matter, or manner, it will naturally be asked, what are my pretensions? I will beg leave to deliver my sentiments on the subject in the words of the excellent and amiable FENELON, extracted from the last of his most admirable *Dialogues on the Eloquence of the Pulpit*.

“I would have a preacher explain the whole plan of religion, and unfold every part of it in the most intelligible manner, by shewing the origin and establishment, the tradition and connection of its principles, its sacraments and institutions.

“For every thing in Scripture is connected; and this connection is, perhaps, the most extraordinary and wonderful thing to be seen in the sacred writings.

“An audience of persons, who had heard the chief points of the Mosaic history and law well explained, would be able to receive far more benefit from an explication of the truths of the Gospel, than the generality of Christians are now.

“Preachers speak every day to the people of the Scriptures, the Church, the Patriarchs, the Law, the Gospel; of Sacrifice, of Moses, and Aaron, and Melchisedek; of Christ, the Prophets, and Apostles; but there is not sufficient care taken to instruct men in the meaning of these things, and the character of these holy persons.

“This

“ This way of having recourse to the first foundations of religion, would be so far from seeming low, that it would give most discourses that force and beauty which they generally want; since the hearers can never be instructed or persuaded in the mysteries of religion, if you do not trace things back to their source.

“ For example—How can you make them understand what the church says, after St Paul, that Jesus Christ is our PASSOVER, if you do not explain to them the Jewish Passover, which was appointed to be a perpetual memorial of their deliverance from Egypt, and to typify a more important redemption, that was reserved for Messiah.

“ Almost every thing in religion is historical. The best way of proving its truth, is to represent it justly; for then it carries its own evidence along with it. A coherent view of the chief facts relative to any person, or transaction, should be given in a concise, lively, close, pathetic manner, accompanied with such moral reflections as arise from the several circumstances, and may best instruct the hearers.

“ A preacher ought to affect people by strong images; but it is from the Scripture that he should learn to make powerful impressions. There he may clearly discover the way to render sermons plain and popular, without losing the force and dignity they ought always to possess.

“ If the clergy applied themselves to this mode of teaching, we should then have two different sorts of preachers. They who are not endowed with a great share of vivacity, would explain the Scripture clearly, without imitating its lively and animated manner; and if they expounded the word of God judiciously, and supported their doctrine by an exemplary

emplary life, they would be very good preachers. They would employ what St Ambrose requires, a chaste, simple, clear style, full of weight and gravity, without affecting elegance, or despising the smoothness and graces of language. The other sort, being of a poetical turn of mind, would explain the holy book in its own style and figures; and by that means become accomplished preachers. The former would instruct their hearers with solidity and perspicuity; the latter would add to this instruction the sublimity, the vehemence, and divine enthusiasm of the Scripture, which would be (if I may so say) entire and living in them, as much as it can be in men, who are not miraculously inspired from above."

This, Reader, is the model which I have chosen, and after which I have humbly endeavoured to work. I count not myself to have attained—Far, very far indeed from it; as you will too soon discover. I have not yet been able by any means to satisfy myself; nor can I hope to satisfy you. I have done as well as I could; and know not that it will be in my power to do better. Nobler and more extensive ideas rise before me; but planning and executing are very different things. Time hastens forward; and life, attended with its cares, perhaps its sorrows, will quickly have run its course. Accept such as I can give, and pardon errors and imperfections. I stand at the door of the temple, with my torch. If you would view its glories, enter in, and there dwell for ever.

C O N T E N T S.

DISCOURSE I.

The Creation of Man.

GEN. i. 26.

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness : and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

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Preached before the University of Oxford, at St Mary's, June 9, 1771.

DISCOURSE II.

The Garden of Eden.

GEN. ii. 8.

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Preached before the University of Oxford, at St Mary's, June 16, 1771.

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GEN. ii. 9.

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Preached before the University of Oxford, at St Mary's, Oct. 18, 1772.

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Preached before the University of Oxford, at St Mary's, Dec. 2, 1764, being the 1st Sunday in Advent.

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Preached before the University of Oxford, at St Mary's, Dec. 11, 1757, being the 3d Sunday in Advent.

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Preached before the University of Oxford, at St Mary's, Jan. 1, 1763, being the Festival of the Circumcision.

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Preached before the University of Oxford, at St Mary's, Jan. 6, 1772, being the Festival of the Epiphany.

DISCOURSE I.

THE CREATION OF MAN.

GEN. i. 26.

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness : and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

CURIOSITY naturally prompts us to enquire into the records of the family, or society, to which we belong. Every little incident, that befel our ancestors, is collected with care, and remembered with pleasure. The relation it bears to us gives it consequence in our eyes, though, in the eyes of others, it may seem to have none. The mind, in its progress, finds attention excited, as the velocity of a falling body is increased ; nor can it repose itself at ease on any account, which stops short of the original, and first founder of the community.

Every motive of this sort conspires to animate our researches into the origination of mankind, and the history of our common progenitor. We cannot but earnestly and anxiously wish to be acquainted with the circumstances relative to the father of that family, of which all nations are parts ; to discover and survey the root of that tree, whose branches have overspread the earth.

Nor can such investigation be deemed matter of curiosity only. To form proper ideas of man, it is necessary we should view him, as he came from the hands of his Creator. We must know, in what state he was placed, what were the duties resulting from that state, and what the powers whereby he was enabled to perform them. We must learn, whether he be now in the same state, or whether an alteration in his state may not have subjected him to new wants, and new obligations. Upon a knowledge of these particulars, every system of religion and morality must be constructed, which is designed for the use of men. A system, in which the consideration of these hath no place, is like a course of diet prescribed by a physician, unacquainted with his patient's constitution, and with the nature of the disease under which he has the misfortune to labour.

It is obvious to remark, that this knowledge of human nature, of what it was at the beginning, and what alterations have since happened in it, is a knowledge to the attainment of which no strength of genius, no depth of reasoning, no subtlety of metaphysical disquisition can ever lead us. It is a matter of fact, and must be ascertained, as matters of fact are, by evidence and testimony. But he only, who made man, can inform us, how man was made; with what endowments, and for what purposes. If he hath not done it, the world is, of necessity, left in utter ignorance of so capital a point. And this reflection alone may supply the place of a thousand arguments, to convince us that he hath done it.

We find an opinion current through heathen antiquity, that all is not right with the human race; that things were not at first as they are now, but
that

that a change hath been introduced for the worse. When the philosophers tell us, that mankind were sent upon earth to do penance for crimes by them committed in a pre-existent state, what is it but saying, that man once was upright and happy; but that, ceasing to be upright, he ceased to be happy; and that natural evil is the consequence and punishment of moral. Nor is it at all difficult to discern, through the fictions of the poets, those truths which gave birth to them, while we read of a golden age, when righteousness and peace kissed each other; of a man framed of clay, and animated by a spark of celestial fire; of a woman endowed with every gift and grace from above; and of the fatal casket, out of which, when opened by her, a flight of calamities overspread the earth; but not without a reserve of HOPE, that, at some future period of refreshment and restitution, they should be done away. Such are the shadowy scenes, which, by the faint glimmering of tradition, reflected from an original revelation, present themselves in that night of the world, the æra of pagan fable and delusion, when the imaginations of poetry and the conjectures of philosophy were equally unable to supply the information which had been long lost, concerning the origin of the world, of man, and of evil.

With this information we are furnished by the writings of Moses, penned under the direction of him who giveth to man the spirit of understanding, for the instruction of ages and generations. We are told, by whom the matter of which our system is composed, was brought into being; and in what manner the several objects around us were gradually and successively formed, till the whole, completely finished, and surveyed by its great author,

was pronounced *good*, or fit, in every respect, to answer the end for which it was designed.

After this are related the particulars concerning the formation of man; the time of his production; the resolution taken upon the occasion; the materials of which he was composed; the divine image in which God created him; and the dominion over the creatures with which he was invested. It is intended, in the following discourse, to offer such considerations, as may be of use towards the explanation and illustration of these particulars, in their order.

With regard to the *time* of man's formation, we may observe of the divine procedure, what is true of every human plan, concerted with wisdom and foresight; that which was first in intention, was last in execution. Man, for whom all things were made, was himself made last of all. We are taught to follow the heavenly artist, step by step, first in the production of the inanimate elements, next of vegetable, and then of animal life, till we come to the master-piece of the creation, MAN, endued with reason and intellect. The house being built, its inhabitant appeared; the feast being set forth, the guest was introduced; the theatre being decorated and illuminated, the spectator was admitted, to behold the splendid and magnificent scenery in the heavens above, and the earth beneath; to view the bodies around him moving in perfect order and harmony, and every creature performing the part allotted it in the universal drama; that, seeing, he might understand, and, understanding, adore its supreme author and director.

Not that, even in the original and perfect state of his intellectual powers, he was left to demonstrate the being of a God, either *a priori*, or *a posteriori*.

THE CREATION OF MAN.

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fig. 1. His Creator, we find, immediately manifested himself to him, and conversed with him, informing him, without all doubt, of what had passed previous to his own existence, which otherwise he never could have known; instructing him, how, and for what purpose the world and man were made, and to whom he was bound to ascribe all praise and glory, on that account. The loss of this instruction occasioned some of his descendants, in after ages, to worship the creature, instead of the Creator. Ignorant of him who gave the sun for a light by day, they fell prostrate before that bright image of its Maker's glory, which to the eye of sense appeared to be the God that governed the world.

The other parts of this system were produced by the word of the Creator. "He spake, and it was done." The elements were his servants: "he said to one, Go, and it went; to another, Come, and it came; to a third, Do this," and the commission was instantly executed. But to the formation of man (with reverential awe, and after the manner of men be it spoken) he seems more immediately to have addressed his power and wisdom. "Let us make man;" All things are now ready; let the work of creation be completed and crowned by the production of its possessor and lord, who is to use, to enjoy, and to rule over it; "Let us make man."

The phraseology, in which this *resolution* is couched, is remarkable; "Let *us* make man;" but the Old Testament furnishes more instances of a similar kind; "Behold, man is become *like one of us*; Let *us* go down, and confound their language; Whom shall *we* send, and who will go for *us*?" These plural forms, thus used by the Deity, demand our attention.

Three solutions of the question have been offered.

The first is that given by the Jews, who tell us, that, in these forms, God speaks of himself and his angels. But may we not ask, upon this occasion,—“Who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor?” With which of the angels did he at any time vouchsafe to share his works and his attributes? Could they have been his coadjutors in the work of creation, which he so often claims to himself, declaring, he will not give the glory of it to another? Do we believe—do the Jews believe—did any body ever believe, that man was made by angels, or in the image and likeness of angels? Upon this opinion, therefore, we need not spend any more time. We know from whence it came, and for what end it was devised and propagated.

A second account of the matter is, that the king of heaven adopts the style employed by the kings of the earth, who frequently speak of themselves in the plural number, to express dignity and majesty. But doth it seem at all reasonable to imagine, that God should borrow his way of speaking from a king, before man was created upon the earth? The contrary supposition would surely carry the air of more probability with it, namely, that because the Deity originally used this mode of expression, therefore kings, considering themselves as his delegates and representatives, afterwards did the same. But however this might be, the interpretation, if admitted, will not suffice to clear the point. For, as it has been judiciously observed, though a king and governor may say *us* and *we*, there is certainly no figure of speech, that will allow any single person to say, “One of us,” when
he

he speaks only of himself. It is a phrase that can have no meaning, unless there be more persons than one concerned.

What then should hinder us from accepting the third solution, given by the best expositors, ancient and modern, and drawn from this consideration, that in the unity of the divine essence there is a plurality of persons co-equal and co-eternal, who might say, with truth and propriety, "Let us make man;" and, "Man is become like one of us?" Of such a personality revelation informs us; it is that upon which the œconomy of man's redemption is founded; his creation, as well as that of the world, is, in different passages, attributed to the Father, to the Son, and the Holy Spirit; what more natural, therefore, than that, at his production, this form of speech should be used by the divine persons? What more rational than to suppose, that a doctrine, so important to the human race, was communicated from the beginning, that men might know whom they worshipped, and how they ought to worship? What other good and sufficient reason can be given, why the name of God, in use among believers from the first, should likewise be in the *plural* number, connected with verbs and pronouns in the *singular*? * It is true, we Christians, with the New Testament in our hands, may not want these arguments to prove the doctrine: but why should we overlook, or slight such very valuable evidence of its having been revealed and received in the church of God, from the foundation of the world? It is a satisfaction, it is a comfort to reflect, that, in this momentous article of our faith, we have patriarchs and prophets for our fathers; that they lived, and that they died in the belief

* בראשית אלהים Gen. i. 1.

belief of it; that the God * of Adam, of Noah, and of Abraham, is likewise our God; and that when we adore him in three persons, and give glory to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, we do as it was done in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be.

Proceed we to consider the *materials*, of which man was composed.

“The word of the Lord once came to the prophet Jeremiah, † saying, Arise, and go down to the potter’s house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words. Then he went down to the potter’s house, and behold he wrought a work on the wheel. And the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, Behold as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are ye in mine hand.”

A scene like this is presented to our imaginations by the words of Moses; “The Lord God formed man out of the dust of the ground;” he ‡ moulded or modelled him as a potter doth; we see the work, as it were, upon the wheel, rising and growing under the hands of the divine artificer!

The human body was not made of the celestial elements, light and air, but of the more gross terrestrial matter, as being designed to receive and communicate notices of terrestrial objects, by organs of a nature similar to them. In this instance, as in another since, God seemeth to have “chosen the base things of the world, to confound things honourable and mighty,” || when of the dust of the ground he composed a frame, superior, in rank and dignity, to the heavens and all their hosts. They whose profession leads them to examine the structure of this astonishing piece of mechanism, these men see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in

* אלהים.

† Jer. xviii. 1.

‡ יצר.

|| 1 Cor. i. 28.

in the formation of the human body. A contemplation of its parts, and their disposition, brought Galen upon his knees, in adoration of the wisdom with which the whole is contrived; and incited him to challenge any one, upon an hundred years study, to tell, how any the least fibre or particle could have been more commodiously placed, either for use, or beauty. While the world shall last, genius and diligence will be producing fresh proofs, that we are "fearfully and wonderfully made;" that "marvellous are the works," and, above all, this capital work of the Almighty; and that the hand which made it must needs be verily and indeed divine.

Into the body of man, thus constructed, we learn from Moses, that God, "breathed the breath of life, and man became a living soul." The question here will be, Whether these words are intended to denote the rational and immortal soul, or the sensitive and animal life?

They are certainly sometimes used in the lower of these acceptations. "Cease ye from man whose breath* is in his nostrils. All creatures in whose nostrils was the breath of life† died by the flood." By these texts it appears that the terms *spirit* and *breath*‡ are used to signify that animal life, which is supported mechanically, by respiration through the nostrils.

But they are likewise used for the rational and immortal soul; witness those words of the psalmist, adopted by our Lord, when expiring on the cross; "Into thy hands I commend my spirit." || So again—"The spirit § shall return to God who gave it." And "The spirit of man ¶ is the candle of the Lord."

Spiritual.

* נשמה.

|| רוחי.

† נשמת רוח חיים.

§ נפשו.

‡ נשמת and רוח.

¶ נשמת אדם.

Spiritual effences and operations come not under the cognizance of those senses, which, during the present state of probation, God has been pleased to make the inlets of our ideas. They must therefore be represented and described to us, in the way of comparison and analogy, by such language as is commonly styled *figurative*, or *metaphorical*. Of animal life, begun and continued by respiration, we have a proper and sufficient knowledge. From a contemplation of that life, and the manner in which it is supported by the air, we are directed to frame our notions of an higher life, maintained by the influence of an higher principle. For this purpose, the terms which denote the former are borrowed to express the latter; and we find the words, translated *spirit*, and *breath*, sometimes used for one, and sometimes for the other.

But when we consider, that man, as other Scriptures do testify, has within him a rational soul, an immortal spirit, which, on the dissolution of the body, returns to God who gave it; that, in this original description of his formation, we may reasonably expect to find both parts of his composition mentioned; and that a personal act of the Deity, that of inspiring the breath of life, is recorded with regard to him, which is not said of the other creatures; we can hardly do otherwise than conclude, that the words were intended to denote not only the animal life, but also another life communicated with it, and represented by it; in a word, that man consisteth of a body so organized as to be sustained in life by the action of the material elements upon it, and a rational immortal soul, supported, in a similar manner, by the influence of a superior and spiritual agency.

We had occasion to observe above, that when the knowledge of the Creator, furnished at the beginning by Revelation, had been lost in the heathen world, men paid to the works of his hands that adoration which was due to him. The material elements were invested with divinity and immortality, and worshipped as gods. It may now be farther observed, that to the soul of man, considered as a portion of these elements, was attributed the same divinity and immortality; and thus things natural were substituted in the place of things spiritual, a proper notion of which could not then be attained, for want of that instruction from above, which directs us how to transfer our ideas from one to the other, and to believe in the latter, as conceived through the medium of the former. So difficult has it ever been found, for the human mind, to pass the bounds of matter, and to explore the invisible wonders of the spiritual world. And whoever observes the progress of that scheme, which is once more set up against Revelation by some, in our own and a neighbouring nation, who affect the title of *philosophers*, in opposition to that of *Christians*, and whose abilities one cannot but lament to see employed in this manner, will perceive its tendency to introduce *materialism*, and to carry us back again to that state of darkness from which it pleased the Father of lights, in mercy, to deliver us, by the Gospel of his Son.

But to return to the Mosaic account of man, of whose distinguishing excellencies we are taught to entertain the most exalted sentiments, when we are told, that he was made "in the *image* and likeness of God." For what more can be said of a creature, than that he is made after the similitude of his Creator?

As

As "God is a spirit," the similitude here spoken of must be a spiritual similitude, and the subject to which it relates must be the spiritual part of man, his rational and immortal soul.

To discover wherein such image and likeness consisted, what better method can we take, than to enquire, wherein consist that divine image and likeness, which, as the Scriptures of the New Testament inform us, were restored in human nature, through the redemption and grace of Christ, who was manifested for that purpose? The image restored was the image lost; and the image lost was that in which Adam was created.

The expression employed by the penmen of the New Testament plainly point out to us this method of proceeding. We read of the new man "which after God is *created*;"* and of man being "renewed after the image of him that *created* him;"† and the like. The use of the term *created* naturally refers us to man's first creation, and leads us to parallel that with his renovation, or new creation, by which he re-obtained those excellencies possessed at the beginning, but afterwards unhappily forfeited.

And what were these?—"Renewed in *knowledge*, after the image of him that created him—Put on the new man, which after God is created in *righteousness* and *true holiness*, *οσιωτητι και αληθεια*, the *holiness* of, or according to *truth*." The divine image, then, is to be found in the understanding, and the will; in the understanding which knows the truth, and in the will which loves it. For when the understanding judges that to be true which with God is true, the man is "renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him;" when the will loves the truth, and all its affections move in the

* Ephes. iv. 24.

† Coloss. iii. 10.

the pursuit and practice of it, the man is "new created after God in righteousness and holiness." This divine image is restored in human nature, by the word of Christ enlightening, and the grace of Christ rectifying the will. These are, in the end, to render man what he was at first created, according to that passage in the writings of King Solomon, which is the shortest and best comment upon the words of Moses—"God made man upright"—the original word * signifies *straight, direct*; there was no error in his understanding, no obliquity in his will. He who says this, says every thing. It is a full and comprehensive account of man in his original state; nothing can be added to it, or taken from it.

Such, then, was Adam, in the day when God crowned him king in Eden, and invested him with sovereignty over the works of his hands, giving him "*dominion* over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth."

It appears to have been the order of Providence, that while the flesh continued in subjection to the spirit, and man to God, so long the creatures should continue in subjection to man, as servants are subject to their lord and master. This original subjection we must suppose to have been universal and absolute. From the creatures man has much to learn, but nothing to fear. If, to answer the purposes of creation, or to convey to his mind ideas of his invisible enemies, any were at that time wild and noxious, with regard to him they were tame and harmless. In perfect security he saw, he con-

sidered, he admired. But when he rebelled against his God, the creatures renounced their allegiance to him, and became, in the hands of their common Creator, instruments of his punishment.—

“The beasts of the field” were no longer “at peace with him.” Yet in consequence of the new covenant and promise to redeem man and the world, we find it said after the flood—“The fear of you and the dread of you shall be on every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea.”*

So far is the superiority of the human species still preserved, that “every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind.”†

In some cases, for the sake of eminently holy persons, favoured by heaven on that account, the instincts of the most savage and ravenous have been suspended; as when some of every kind assembled and lodged together in the ark, and when the mouths of the lions were stopped in the den of Babylon, while the righteous and greatly beloved Daniel was there. The Redeemer of the world endowed his disciples with the original privilege—

“Behold I give you power to tread on serpents, and on scorpions; and nothing shall by any means hurt you.”‡ And, agreeably to such promise, St Paul “shook off the viper into the fire, and felt no harm.”||

The viiith psalm is a beautiful representation of the extent of this privilege, as it was possessed, at the beginning, by the first Adam, and as it hath been since restored to the second—“O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! Who hast set thy glory above the heavens.

Out

* Gen. ix. 2.

‡ Luke x. 19.

† James iii. 7.

|| Acts xxviii. 5.

Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength, because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger. When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him; and the son of man that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: all sheep and oxen, yea and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas. O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!"

Let us indulge a few reflections on the foregoing particulars.

The imagination naturally endeavours to form some idea of the sensations that must have arisen in the mind of the first man, when, awaking into existence, with all his senses and faculties perfect, he beheld the glory and beauty of the new created world. Faded as we must suppose its glory and its beauty now to be, enough still remains, to excite continual wonder, praise, and adoration. Yet it is represented in the Scriptures of truth, as lying under a curse, as groaning and travailing in pain, and as little better than a prison, from which all, who are truly sensible of its condition, and their own, wish and pray to be delivered, into the liberty of the children of God. But if such be our prison, what notions are we led to form of those mansions, which our Lord is gone before to prepare for us, in his Father's house? Creation was finished in six days, and we read, that, "on the seventh,

God rested from all his work which he created and made.* But the transgression of man would not suffer him to rest. "My Father," says the blessed Jesus, "worketh hitherto, and I work."† Sin made its way into the first creation, and is gradually destroying it, as a moth fretteth a garment—"Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath; for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner."‡ "But we, according to his promise, look for new heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."§ We read of one, who, in vision, "saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away."§ When the new creation shall be finished and prepared, an act of Omnipotence will be exerted, similar to that which passed at the formation of Adam. The Lord God will again "form man out of the dust of the ground, and breathe into his nostrils the breath of life." From his long sleep in the chamber of the grave, he will awake to behold the never fading glories of a world, which "will have no need of the sun neither of the moon to shine in it, for the Lord God and the Lamb," those brighter and inextinguishable luminaries, shall enlighten it for ever.¶ The Almighty shall again with complacency survey the works of his hands, and pronounce every thing he has made to be "very good;" he shall again rest on the seventh day; the children of the resurrection shall enter into his rest, and keep an eternal sabbath. Let us "comfort one another with these words."

A view

* Gen. ii. 2.

† John v. 17.

‡ Isai li. 6.

§ 2 Pet. iii. 13.

§ Rev. xxi. 1.

¶ Rev. xxi. 26.

A view of the different materials of which man is composed, may teach us to form a proper estimate of him. He stands between the two worlds, the natural and the spiritual, and partakes of both. His body is material, but its inhabitant descends from another system. His soul, like the world from which it comes, is immortal; but his body, like the world to which it belongs, is frail and perishable. From its birth it contains in it the seeds and principles of dissolution, towards which it tends every day and hour, by the very means that nourish and maintain it, and which no art can protract beyond a certain term. In spite of precaution and medicine, "the evil days will come, and the years draw nigh, when he shall say, I have no pleasure in them." Pains and sorrows will succeed each other, as "the clouds return after the rain," blackening the face of heaven, and darkening the sources of light and joy. The hands, those once active and vigorous "keepers of the house," grown paralytic, shall "tremble;" and "the strong men," those firm and able columns which supported it, shall "bow themselves," and sink under the weight. The external "grinders" of the food, the teeth, "shall cease, because they are few," and the work of mastication shall be imperfectly performed. Dim suffusion shall veil the organs of sight, "they that look out of the windows shall be darkened." "The doors," or valves, "shall be shut in the streets," or alleys of the body, when the digestive powers are awakened, and "the sound of the" internal "grinding is low." Sleep, if it light upon the eye-lids of age, will quickly remove again, and "he will rise up" at the time when the first "voice of the bird" proclaims the approach of the morning. "All the daughters of music shall be brought low;"

he will hear no more the voice of singing men, and singing women. Timidity and distrust will predominate, and he will be alarmed at every thing; "he shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way." As the early "almond tree," when it flourishes in full blossom, his hoary head shall be conspicuous in the congregation, the sure prognostic not of spring, alas, but of winter; he who, like "the grasshopper," in the season of youth was so sprightly in his motions, now scarce able to crawl upon the earth, "shall be a burden" to himself, and the organs of sense being vitiated and impaired, "desire" and appetite "shall fail." The spinal marrow, that "silver cord," with the infinite ramifications of the nerves, thence derived, will be relaxed, and lose its tone; "and the golden bowl," the receptacle of the brain, from which it proceeds, "shall be broken." The vessel, by which as a "pitcher," the blood is carried back to the heart for a fresh supply, "shall be broken at the fountain, and the wheel," or instrument of circulation, which throws it forth again to the extremities of the body, "shall be broken at the cistern."—When this highly finished piece of mechanism shall be thus disjointed and dissolved, "then shall the dust," of which it was framed, "return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return to God who gave it." Learn we from hence, to bestow on each part of our composition that proportion of time and attention, which, upon a due consideration of its nature and importance, it shall appear to claim at our hands.

To

* See the *Portrait of Old Age*, in a *Paraphrase on the six former verses of the xlii chapter of Ecclesiastes*, by JOHN SMITH, M. D. of the COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS; reprinted in 1752, for F. WITHERS, at the Seven Stars, between the two Temple-Gates, Fleet-Street.

To stamp on man his own image, was the design of God in creating him; to restore that image, when lost, was the design of God in redeeming him. Could greater honour have been done to human nature? Never may the guilt be ours of debasing our nature, and obliterating "this image and superscription;" a species surely of treason against the majesty of heaven. Sloth will obscure the fair impression; its attendants, ignorance and vice, will destroy it. Let diligence therefore be appointed to watch over it, and to retouch, from time to time, the lines that are faded; till, the whole standing confessed in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, men may glorify our Father which is in heaven, while they behold his resemblance upon earth. So shall we answer the ends of our creation and redemption, and serve our generation in the most effectual manner. And though, when this is done, we must close our eyes in death, and sleep with our fathers; yet the hour cometh, in which we shall open them again, to "behold thy face, O God, in righteousness; we shall be satisfied, when we awake with thy likeness." *

Was Adam invested with sovereignty over the creatures? Observe we from hence, that man was made to rule. Majestic in his form, he was ordained to trample upon earth, and aspire to heaven, which, without putting a force upon nature, he cannot but behold, and regard. In the original subjection of the creatures we see what ought to be that of every desire and appetite, terrestrial and animal, to the ruling principle within us. The subtlety of some creatures, and the fierceness of others, now exhibit to us the difficulty of subduing
and

and governing the passions, broken loose, like them, from the dominion of their master ; infomuch, that the apostle, who asserts, that every creature may be, and has been tamed of man, yet says of one part of man, the tongue, "it is a deadly evil, which no man can tame," meaning, by his own powers. Through the redemption and grace which are by Christ Jesus, this dominion, as well as the other, is restored, not only over our own passions, but over still more formidable opponents, the evil spirits in arms against us. For thus our Lord gave his disciples power not only over the natural "serpents and scorpions," but over some, whose venom is of a more malignant and fatal kind ; "over all the power of THE ENEMY." The apostles returned, accordingly, crying out, "Lord, the very DEVILS are subject unto us, through thy name !" And we have a general promise, that, in our combats with them, God will give us victory, and bruise their leader, Satan himself, under our feet. Our Redeemer is exalted above the heavens, and human nature in the second Adam, restored to dominion over all the earth. And though, at present, the apostle's lot may be ours, to "fight with beasts," with evil men, evil passions, and evil spirits, yet through God we shall do great acts ; it is he that shall tread down those that rise up against us ; till finally triumphant over the last enemy, and exalted to the eternal throne, we shall view the earth beneath us, and the sun and stars shall be dust under our feet.

DISCOURSE II.

THE GARDEN OF EDEN.

GEN. ii. 8.

*And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden,
and there he put the man whom he had formed.*

IN a preceding discourse some considerations were offered, tending to elucidate the particulars related by Moses concerning the origination of man; namely, the time of his formation; the resolution taken by the Deity on the occasion; the materials of which he was composed; the divine image in which he was created; and the dominion over the creatures with which he was invested.

The words now read mark out the history of that habitation in which it pleased the Almighty to place him at the beginning, for the subject of our present enquiries. A subject not only curious, but highly interesting. For if Levi be said to have paid tythes to Melchisedek, as being in the loins of Abraham, at the time of that transaction; we may, in like manner, regard ourselves, as having taken possession of Eden; being in the loins of our ancestor, when he did so. And though it can afford but small comfort, to reflect upon the excellence of an inheritance which we have lost, it may inspire into us due sentiments of gratitude and love towards that blessed person, who hath recovered it for us. And thus every consideration which enhances

hances the value of the possession, will proportionably magnify the goodness of our great benefactor.

For these reasons, we sometimes, perhaps, find ourselves disposed to lament the conciseness and obscurity of that account which Moses hath left us of man's primeval estate in paradise. But when we recollect, that to this account we owe all the information we have, upon so important a point, it will become us to be thankful that we have been told so much, rather than to murmur because we have been told no more; and instead of lamenting the obscurity of the Mosaic account, to try whether, by diligence and attention, that obscurity may not be, in part, dispelled. For though Moses hath only given us a compendious relation of facts (and facts of the utmost importance may be related in very few words) that relation is ratified and confirmed in the Scriptures of both Testaments, in which are found many references and allusions to it. By bringing these forth to view, and comparing them together, we may possibly be led to some agreeable speculations concerning the situation of Adam in the Garden of Eden, the nature of his employment, and the felicity he there experienced.

On a subject so remote, and confessedly difficult, demonstration will not be expected. Much of what is advanced, must be advanced rather as probable, than certain; and where there is little positive information, the candor so often experienced will accept of such notices as can be obtained by inference and deduction.

When we think of Paradise, we think of it as the seat of delight. The name EDEN authorises us so to do. It signifies PLEASURE; and the idea of pleasure is inseparable from that of a Garden, where man still seeks after lost happiness, and where, perhaps,

haps, a good man finds the nearest resemblance of it, which this world affords. "What is requisite," exclaims a great and original genius, "to make a wife and a happy man, but reflexion and peace? And both are the natural growth of a Garden. A Garden to the virtuous is a Paradise still extant; a Paradise unlost." * The culture of a Garden, as it was the first employment of man, so it is that, to which the most eminent persons in different ages have retired, from the camp and the cabinet, to pass the interval between a life of action, and a removal hence. When old Dioclesian was invited from his retreat, to resume the purple which he had laid down some years before, "Ah," said he, "could you but see those fruits and herbs of mine own raising at Salona, you would never talk to me of empire!" An accomplished statesman of our own country, who spent the latter part of his life in this manner, hath so well described the advantages of it, that it would be injustice to communicate his ideas in any words but his own. "No other sort of abode," says he, "seems to contribute so much both to the tranquillity of mind, and indolence of body. The sweetness of the air, the pleasantness of the smell, the verdure of plants, the cleanness and lightness of food, the exercise of working or walking; but, above all, the exemption from care and solicitude, seem equally to favour and improve both contemplation and health, the enjoyment of sense and imagination, and thereby the quiet and ease both of body and mind. A Garden has been the inclination of kings, and the choice of philosophers; the common favourite of public and private men; the pleasure of the greatest, and the care of the meanest; an employment and

* DR YOUNG—*Centaur not fabulous*. P. 61.

and a possession, for which no man is too high, nor too low. If we believe the Scriptures," concludes he, "we must allow, that God Almighty esteemed the life of man in a Garden the happiest he could give him; or else, he would not have placed Adam in that of Eden" *

The Garden of Eden had, doubtless, all the perfection it could receive from the hands of Him, who ordained it to be the mansion of his favourite creature. We may reasonably presume it to have been the earth in miniature, and to have contained specimens of all natural productions, as they appeared, without blemish, in an unfallen world; and these disposed in admirable order, for the purposes intended. And it may be observed, that when, in after times, the penmen of the Scriptures have occasion to describe any remarkable degree of fertility and beauty, of grandeur and magnificence, they refer us to the Garden of Eden. "He beheld all the plain well watered as the Garden of the Lord. † The land was as the Garden of Eden before them, but behind them a desolate wilderness." ‡ The prophet Ezekiel, at the command of God, for an admonition to Pharaoh, thus portrays the pride of the Assyrian empire, under the splendid and majestic imagery afforded by vegetation in its most flourishing state. "The Assyrian was a cedar in Lebanon, fair of branches, and with a shadowing throud, and of an high stature, and his top was among the thick boughs. The waters made him great, the deep set him up on high, with her rivers running round about his plants, and sent out her little rivers to all the trees in the field. Therefore his height was exalted above all the trees of the

* Sir WILLIAM TEMPLE, *Gardens of Epicurus*.

† Gen. xiii. 10.

‡ Joel ii. 3.

the field, and his boughs were multiplied, and his branches became long, because of the multitude of waters when he shot forth.—Thus was he fair in his greatness, and in the length of his branches: for his root was by great waters. The cedars in the Garden of God could not hide him, nor was any tree in the Garden of God like unto him in his beauty. I have made him fair by the multitude of his branches; so that all the trees of Eden, that were in the Garden of God envied him.”* After having related the fall of his towering and extensive empire, the prophet makes the application to the king of Egypt; “To whom art thou thus like, in glory and greatness, among the trees of Eden? Yet shalt thou be brought down with the trees of Eden, to the lower parts of the earth.” In another place we find the following ironical address to the king of Tyre, as having attempted to rival the true God, and the glories of his Paradise. “Thou sealest up the sun, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou hast been in Eden, the Garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering—thou wast upon the holy mountain of God—thou wast perfect in thy ways, from the day that thou wast created, until iniquity was found in thee—Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom, by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee.”†

Traditions and traces of this original Garden seem to have gone forth into all the earth, though, as an elegant writer justly observes, “they must be expected to have grown fainter and fainter in every transfusion from one people to another. The Romans probably derived their notion of it, expressed

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in

* Ezek xxxi. 3, &c.

† Ezek. xxviii. 12 &c

in the gardens of Flora, from the Greeks, among whom this idea seems to have been shadowed out under the stories of the gardens of Alcinous. In Africa they had the gardens of the Hesperides; and in the east those of Adonis. The term of *Horti Adonides* was used by the ancients to signify *gardens of pleasure*, which answers strangely to the very name of Paradise, or the Garden of *Eden*.* In the writings of the poets, who have lavished all the powers of genius and the charms of verse upon the subject, these and the like counterfeit or secondary paradises, the copies of the true, will live and bloom, so long as the world itself shall endure.

It hath been already suggested, that a Garden is calculated no less for the improvement of the mind, than for the exercise of the body; and we cannot doubt, but that peculiar care would be taken of that most important end, in the disposition of the Garden of Eden.

From the situation and circumstances of Adam, it should not seem probable, that an all wise and all gracious Creator would leave him in that state of ignorance, in which, since the days of Faustus Socinus, it hath been but too much the fashion to represent him. For may we not argue in some such manner as the following?

If so fair a world was created for the use and satisfaction of his terrestrial part, formed out of the dust, can we imagine, that the better part, the immortal spirit from above, the inhabitant of the fleshly tabernacle prepared for it, should be left in a state of destitution and desolation, unprovided with wisdom, its food, its support, and its delight?

If men, since the fall, and labouring under all the disadvantages occasioned by it, have been enabled

* SPENCE's *Polymetis*, cited in *Letters on Mythology*, P. 126.

bled to make those attainments in knowledge, which they certainly have made; and we find the understanding of a Solomon replete with every species of wisdom, human and divine; can we conceive ignorance to have been the characteristic of the first formed father of the world, created with all his powers and faculties complete and perfect, and living under the immediate tuition of God?

If upon the trial of Adam, as the head and representative of mankind, their fate, as well as his own, both in time and eternity, was to depend, can we ever think, his Maker would expose him to such a trial, with a mind not better informed, than that of a child or an idiot?

If redemption restored what was lost by the fall, and the second Adam was a counterpart of the first, must we not conceive Adam to have once been what man is, when restored by grace to "the image of God in wisdom and holiness?" And does not he, who degrades the character of the *Son of God** in Paradise, degrade in proportion the character of that other *Son of God*, and the redemption and restoration which are by him?

Our first father differed from all his descendants in this particular, that he was not to attain the use of his understanding by a gradual process from infancy, but came into being in full stature and vigour of mind as well as body. He found creation likewise in its prime. It was morning with man and the world.

We are not certain with regard to the time allowed him, to make his observations upon the different objects, with which he found himself surrounded; but it should seem, either that sufficient

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time

* Luke iii. 38.—"Which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God."

time was allowed him for that end, or that he was enabled, in some extraordinary manner, to pervade their essences, and discover their properties. For we are informed, that God brought the creatures to him, that he might impose upon them suitable names; a work which in the opinion of Plato, * must be ascribed to God himself. The use and intent of names is to express the natures of the things named; and in the knowledge of those natures, at the beginning, God, who made them, must have been man's instructor. It is not likely, that without such an instructor, men could ever have formed a language at all; since it is a task which requires much thought; and the great masters of reason seem to be agreed, that, without language, we cannot think to any purpose. However that may be, from the original imposition of names by our first parent we cannot but infer, that his knowledge of things natural must have been very eminent and extensive; not inferior, we may suppose, to that of his descendant, king Solomon, who "spake of trees, from the cedar to the hyssop, and of beasts, and fowl, and creeping things and fishes." It is therefore probable, that Plato asserted no more than the truth, when he asserted, according to the traditions he had gleaned up in Egypt and the east, that the first man was of all men *Φιλοσοφώτατος*, the greatest philosopher.

As man was made for the contemplation of God here, and for the enjoyment of him hereafter, we cannot imagine, that his knowledge would terminate on earth, though it took its rise there. Like the patriarch's ladder, its foot was on earth, but its top, doubtless, reached to heaven. By it the mind ascended from the creatures to the Creator, and descended

* Τα πάντα ονόματι ε. Οὐκ ἴδμεν. — In Cratylus.

THE GARDEN OF EDEN.

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descended from the Creator to the creatures. It was the golden chain, which connected matter and spirit, preserving a communication between the two worlds.

That God had revealed and made himself known to Adam, appears from the circumstances related; namely, that he took him, and put him into the garden of Eden; that he conversed with him, and communicated a law, to be by him observed; that he caused the creatures to come before him, and brought Eve to him. In these transactions, God probably assumed some visible appearance; because, otherwise than by such assumed appearance, no man, while in the body, can see God. And we find, by what passed after the fatal transgression, that "the voice or sound of the Lord God walking in the garden," was a voice, or sound, to which Adam had been accustomed, though guilt for the first time had made him afraid of it.

If there was, at the beginning, this familiar intercourse between Jehovah and Adam, and he vouchsafed to converse with him, as he afterwards did with Moses, "as a man converseth with his friend," there can be no reasonable doubt, but that he instructed him, as far as was necessary, in the knowledge of his Maker, of his own spiritual and immortal part, of the adversary he had to encounter, of the consequences to which disobedience would subject him, and of those invisible glories, a participation of which was to be the reward of his obedience.

When God, in after times, selected a peculiar people to be his church and heritage, to receive the law from his mouth, and to be the guardians of his promises, he "chose one place to place his name there;" to be the place of his residence, where he

appeared and was consulted. He gave directions for the construction of a temple, or house, in a particular manner appropriated to him, and called his; which, though composed of worldly elements, was so framed as to exhibit an apt resemblance, model, or pattern of heavenly things; to serve as a school for instruction, as a sanctuary for devotion. Might not the Garden of Eden be a kind of temple, or sanctuary, to Adam; a place chosen for the residence and appearance of God; a place designed to represent and give him ideas of heavenly things; a place sacred to contemplation and devotion? Something of this sort seems to be intimated by the account we have of the garden in the second chapter of Genesis, and to be confirmed by the references and allusions to it, in other parts of the Scriptures.

With this view, we may observe, that though Paradise was created with the rest of the world, yet we are informed, the hand of God was, in a more especial manner, employed in preparing this place for the habitation of man. "The Lord God planted a Garden eastward in Eden. And out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food. And a river went out of Eden, to water the Garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads." Thus the great architect of the universe, he who, in the language of the apostle, "built all things," is described as selecting, disposing, and adorning this wonderful and happy spot, wherein was to be placed the creature made after his own image and likeness, but a little lower than the angels. Does not this circumstance suggest to us, that something more was intended, than what generally enters into our idea of a Garden?

Whenever

Whenever the Garden of Eden is mentioned in the Scriptures, it is called "the Garden of God," or "the Garden of the Lord;" expressions which denote some peculiar designation of it to sacred purposes, some appropriation to God and his service, as is confessedly the case with many similar phrases; such as "house of God, altar of God, man of God," and the like; all implying, that the persons and things spoken of were consecrated to him, and set apart for a religious use.

When it is said, "the Lord God took the man and put him into the Garden of Eden, to dress it, and to keep it," the words undoubtedly direct us to conceive of it, as a place for the exercise of the body. We readily acquiesce in this, as the truth, but not as the whole truth; it being difficult to imagine, that so noble a creature, the Lord of the world, should have no other, or higher employment. Much more satisfaction will be found in supposing, that our first parents, while thus employed, like the priests under the law, while they ministered in the temple, were led to contemplations of a more exalted nature, "serving to the example and shadow of heavenly things." The powers of the body and the faculties of the mind might be set to work at the same time, by the same objects. And it is well known, that the words here used,* do as frequently denote mental as corporeal operations; and under the ideas of DRESSING and KEEPING the sacred Garden, may fairly imply the CULTIVATION and OBSERVATION of such religious truths, as were pointed out by the external signs and sacraments, which Paradise contained.

That some of the objects in Eden were of a sacramental nature, we can hardly doubt, when we read

* דָּבַק and שָׁמַר.

read of "the tree of knowledge," and "the tree of life." The fruit of a material tree could not, by any virtue inherent in it, convey "the knowledge of good and evil," or cause that, by eating it, a man should "live for ever." But such fruit might be ordained as a sacrament, upon the participation of which, certain spiritual effects should follow. This is entirely conformable to reason, to the nature of man, and of religion.

It is remarkable, that, in the earliest ages, a custom should be found to prevail, both among the people of God, and idolaters, of setting apart and consecrating gardens and groves, for the purpose of religious worship. Thus Abraham, we are told, "planted a tree, or grove, at Beer-sheba, and called on the name of the everlasting God."* The worshippers of false Gods are described, in the writings of the prophets, as "sacrificing in gardens," as "purifying themselves in gardens, behind one tree in the midst;" and it is foretold, that they should be "ashamed for the oaks which they had desired, and confounded for the gardens which they had chosen."† A surprizing uniformity in this point may be traced through all the different periods of idolatry, as subsisting among the Canaanites, the Egyptians, the Greeks, and the Romans. Groves were dedicated to the Gods, and particular species of trees were sacred to particular deities. The same usage prevailed among the Druids, in these parts of the world. And to this day, the ailes of our Gothic churches and cathedrals are evidently built in imitation of those arched groves, which of old supplied the place of temples. It is not, therefore, without reason, that the author of a learned dissertation on the subject makes the following

* Gen. xxi. 33.

† Mai. lxx. 3. lxxvi. 17.

lowing remark—"These were the hallowed fanes of the ancients, in which they performed divine worship. And indeed, if we would trace up this rite to its origin, we must have recourse to the true God himself, who instituted in Paradise a sacred garden, or grove; ordained Adam to be the high priest of it, and consecrated in it two trees, for a public testimony of religion."

But upon the supposition now made, that the Garden of Eden served as a kind of Temple for our first parents, might we not expect to find some resemblance of it in the tabernacle and temple afterwards erected by the appointment of God, for his residence in the midst of his people Israel? The question is by no means absurd, especially if we recollect, that it was the design of the Mosaic sanctuary, with its apparatus, to prefigure the restoration of those spiritual blessings, which were forfeited and lost by the transgression in Paradise. Let us therefore enquire what satisfaction the Scriptures will afford us upon this point.

The principal objects in the Garden of Eden, with which Revelation has brought us acquainted, are the plantations of trees, and the rivers of water, by which those plantations were nourished and supported in glory and beauty. Was there any thing of this sort in or about the tabernacle and temple?

With regard to the plantations, two passages in the psalms incline us to think, there were such in the courts of the Jewish sanctuary, as well as in that of Eden; "I am like a green olive tree in the house of God." * The righteous shall flourish like a palm-tree, he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord, shall

* PS. LIII. 8.

shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing."* These texts seem to suppose the real existence of such plantations, and, at the same time, to intimate the end and design of them, namely, to represent the progress and improvement of the faithful in virtue, through the influence of the divine favour. The same pleasing and expressive image is employed to the same purpose, in the first psalm—"He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatever he doth shall prosper."

As to the rivers of water which supplied and refreshed the Garden of Eden and all its productions, we meet with something analogous to them, both in the tabernacle and temple.

During the journey of the children of Israel from Egypt to Canaan, the camp in general and the sacred tabernacle in particular were supplied with water in a miraculous manner, not only at the time when Moses smote the rock, but the same supply accompanied them afterwards—"They drank of that rock," that is, the water of that rock, "which followed them." "He led thee (says Moses) through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who made water to flow for thee of the rock of flint."† And these waters, like those in Eden, were of a sacramental nature. "They did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual rock which followed them, and that rock was Christ."‡ How lively a representation of that heavenly grace, which comforts

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* Ps. xcii. 12.

† Deut. viii. 15.

‡ 1 Cor. x. 4.

our weary spirits, and enables us to accomplish our journey through the wilderness of life !

If from the tabernacle we proceed to the temple, we are there presented with the sacred streams of Siloah, breaking forth and flowing from the mount of God. In Ezekiel's famous vision of the new temple, there is a wonderful description, founded on the real situation of things at mount Sion, explaining their signification, and unavoidably carrying our thoughts back to the waters and plantations of the original sanctuary in Eden. "Afterward he brought me again unto the door of the house, and behold waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward.—Then said he to me, These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed. And it shall come to pass, that every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the river shall come, shall live——And by the river, upon the bank thereof, on this side, and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade; neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to its months, because their waters issued out of the sanctuary; and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaves thereof for medicine."*

When the prophets have occasion to foretel the great and marvellous change to be effected in the moral world, under the evangelical dispensation, they frequently borrow their ideas and expressions from the history of that garden, in which innocence and felicity once dwelt together, and which they represent as again springing up and blooming in the wilderness. Of the many passages which occur,

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* Ezek. xlviii. 1. et seq.

two or three only shall be recited. "The Lord will comfort Sion, he will comfort all her waste places; he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the Garden of the Lord: joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody;"* such joy and gladness, such thanksgiving and melody, at the restitution of all things, as were at their first creation, when "God saw every thing he had made, and behold, it was very good;" when "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy."—"When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the vallies; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree; and I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together: that they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the Lord hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it."† "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon: they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God."‡

At the time appointed, these predictions received their accomplishment. Men "saw the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God." By the death and resurrection of the Redeemer, lost Paradise

* *Isai. li. 3.*

† *Isai. xli. 17.*

‡ *Isai. xxxv. 1.*

life was regained; and its inestimable blessings, wisdom, righteousness and holiness, are now to be found and enjoyed in the Christian church. But as men are still men, and not angels, those blessings are still represented and conveyed by sacramental symbols, analogous to the original ones in Eden. From the sacred font flows the waters of life, to purify, to refresh, to comfort; "a river goes out of Eden to water the garden," and to "baptize all nations;" while the eucharist answers to the fruit of the tree of life: at the holy table, we may now "put forth our hands, and take, and eat, and live for ever."

Let us go one step farther, and consider the state of things, in the *heavenly* kingdom of our Lord. There, it is true, all figures and shadows, symbols and sacraments, shall be no more; because faith will there be lost in vision, and we shall "know even as we are known." But in the mean time, till we attain that perfect consummation, ~~was~~ any person admitted to a sight of heaven, and the wonders that are therein, he could no otherwise describe them to us, who are yet in the body, than by the way of picture and similitude. This was the case of St Paul. In a divine extasy, he had been caught up, and made to see and hear things, which he could not impart to others, on account of their incapacity to receive them. What then does he? He refers us to the habitation of our first parents, for a general and comparative idea of them. "I knew a man (says he) who was caught up into Paradise." Our Lord, giving the penitent thief to understand, that his sorrows would soon be at an end, and he should pass, with his Saviour, into a place of rest and joy, uses the same expression—"This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." The beloved disci-

ciple, who was frequently in the spirit translated to those celestial mansions which Christ is gone to prepare for us, gives a more particular and extended description of them. But how? By bringing to our view all Eden, its waters and plantations, together with those seen by Ezekiel, in his vision of the new temple. "He shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as chrystal, proceeding out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb.—And of either side of the river was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.—To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.—Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life.—And the spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will let him take the waters of life freely." In these passages, the divine scenery is evidently borrowed from objects once really existing in the terrestrial Paradise, and employed to aid our conceptions, in apprehending celestial glories. If, therefore, we are taught, that heaven resembles the Garden of Eden, it seems fair and reasonable to conclude, that the Garden of Eden resembled heaven, and was, from the beginning, intended so to do; that, like the temple under the law, and the church under the Gospel, it was, to its happy possessors, a place chosen for the residence of God; a place designed to represent and furnish them with ideas of heavenly things; a place sacred to contemplation and devotion; in one word, that it was the primitive temple and church, formed and consecrated for the use of man, in his state of innocence.

There,

There, undisturbed by care, and, as yet, unassailed by temptation, all his faculties perfect, and his appetites in subjection, he walked with God, as a man walketh with his friend, and enjoyed communion with heaven, though his abode was upon earth. He studied the works of God, as they came fresh from the hands of the workmaster, and in the creation, as in a glass, he was taught to behold the glories of the Creator. Trained, in the school of Eden, by the material elements of a visible world, to the knowledge of one that is immaterial and invisible, he found himself excited, by the beauty of the picture, to aspire after the transcendent excellence of the divine original. This sacred Garden the first Adam by transgression lost; but all the blessings, signified and represented by it, have been, through the second Adam, restored to his posterity. In our stead, he subjected himself to the vengeance of "the flaming sword," and regained for us an entrance into Eden. For, "When he overcame the sharpness of death, he opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers." He himself "the Tree of Life in the midst of the Paradise of God;" and, by the effusion of his Spirit, he gives us to drink "rivers of living water." In his church here below, he has all along communicated, and still communicates his gifts, by external sacraments, which serve at once as signs, as means, and as pledges: but, admitted to the church above, we shall see, and taste them, as they are. "Thou," O Lord Jesus, "shalt shew us," for thou only canst now shew us "the path of LIFE," the "way to the tree of life," and introduce us to the truth and substance of all that was shadowed out by the blissful scenes of Eden; for "in thy presence is the fulness of joy, and at thy right hand there are PLEASURES for evermore."

DISCOURSE III.

THE TREE OF LIFE.

GEN. ii. Part of verse 9.

The Tree of Life also in the midst of the Garden.

SOME arguments were offered upon a former occasion, tending to prove, that the Garden of Eden, laid out and planted by the hand of the Almighty, for the habitation of our first parents, in a state of innocence and felicity, was of a figurative and sacramental nature; that, like the temple under the law, and the church under the Gospel, it was, to its happy possessors, a place chosen for the residence of God; a place designed to represent, and furnish them with ideas of heavenly things; a place sacred to contemplation and devotion.

Among the objects presented to us, there is one, which, though then taken into the general account with the rest, may seem to claim a more particular attention. It stands conspicuous in the Mosaic description, the capital figure in that beautiful piece. It is said to have been placed in the centre of Eden, like the sun of the little system, and bears a name sufficiently calculated to awaken curiosity. The inspired historian having informed us, that "the Lord God caused to grow out of the ground every tree that was pleasant to the sight, and good for food;" every thing, in the vegetable way, either
useful,

useful, or ornamental; adds—"The Tree of Life also in the midst of the garden."

Life, we know, as it relates to man, is twofold; that of the body, and that of the soul; animal and spiritual; temporal and eternal. Each requires to be supported by a nutriment adapted to its nature, and supplied by something external to itself. The food of the body is, like the body, material, and cometh out of the earth; the food of the soul is, like the soul, spiritual, and cometh down from heaven. The Tree of Life was, doubtless, a material tree, producing material fruit, proper, as such, for the nourishment of the body. The question will be, whether it was intended to be eaten, in common, for that end alone; or whether it was not rather set apart, to be partaken of, at a certain time, or times, as a symbol, or sacrament of that celestial principle, which nourishes the soul unto immortality; meaning, by that term, not a natural immortality, or bare existence, but that divine, spiritual, eternal life, which was lost by the fall, and the restitution of which is now "the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

If it be supposed, that the Tree of Life was designed solely for the support of the body of man, there will appear no reason for its being distinguished, as it is by its appellation, from the other trees of the garden, which were all, in that sense, equally *trees of life*, being, as we are told, "good for food." And indeed, the matter seems to be clearly determined otherwise, by the twenty-second verse of the third chapter, where we find fallen man excluded from Paradise, "lest he should put forth his hand, and take also of the fruit of the Tree of Life, and eat, and live FOR EVER."* Immortality, therefore, was to have been obtained, according to God's

original appointment, by eating the fruit of the Tree of Life; not, surely, as the Jews idly talk, by any medicinal quality, or virtue, preserving the eater from sickness and death, neither of which, by the way, was in the world, till introduced by sin. No; the thing speaks itself. A material tree could only confer eternal life as a divinely instituted symbol, or sacrament; as, "an outward visible sign of an inward spiritual grace, given to Adam, as a means whereby he was to receive the same, and a pledge to assure him thereof." Hereby he would be continually reminded of the truth, communicated to him, without all doubt, from the beginning; that there was another and a better life than that led by him in the terrestrial and figurative Paradise; a life, on which he was to set his affections, and to which he was to look, as the end, the reward, the crown of his obedience; a life, supported, as it was given, by emanation from that Being, who only hath life in himself, and is the fountain, from which, in various ways, it flows to all his creatures. Of Him, as the glorious sun of the intellectual world, and of his gracious gift, streaming, like light through the heavens, to enliven and bless the spiritual system, the Tree of Life, with its fruit, in the midst of Eden, is apprehended to have been ordained, as an instructive and comfortable symbol; that so a memorial of his abundant goodness might be shewn upon earth, and new created man might sing of his righteousness.

The sacramental designation of the Tree of Life in Paradise may be farther evinced, perhaps, by a passage or two in the book of St John's Revelation. "To him that overcometh," says the captain of our salvation, "will I give to eat of the Tree of Life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God."* And again—"Blessed are they that do his com-

* Rev. II. 7.

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mandments, that they may have right to the Tree of Life." * By "eating of the Tree of Life in the Paradise of God," is here evidently meant a participation of eternal life with God in heaven. Of this eternal life the faithful followers of their great leader are to be put in possession, as the reward of their labours, when those labours shall have been accomplished; when they shall have walked to the end of their journey in the path of Christ's commandments, and shall have finally overcome their spiritual enemies. May we not therefore, by parity of reason, infer from hence the signification and intent of the Tree of Life in Eden? By means of that sacrament, had Adam gone happily through his probation, and persevered in obedience unto the end, he would have been admitted, in the kingdom of heaven, to that state of eternal life with God, for which he was always designed, and of which Paradise was the earthly resemblance. He would have been removed from the shadows of this world to the realities of a better. His removal must have differed, in the manner of it, from that of which we now live, or ought to live, in expectation. Without sin, death could have had no power over him. He would have been translated alive, as Enoch and Elijah, for particular purposes, afterwards were. The change would have been wrought in him at once, as it was in them, and as it will be in those, who shall be found alive, at the coming of our Lord to judgment.

When transgression had subjected Adam to a sentence of condemnation, the case was altered. Glory and immortality could no longer be obtained upon the terms of the first covenant, now broken and void. The very attempt became criminal. Man
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* Rev. xxii. 14.

was to be put under a new covenant, and in a new course of trial. He was to suffer in the flesh for sin, and to pay the penalty of death. But, through the merits of a surety, that death was to be made the gate of immortality. By faith he was to acquire, upon the mediatorial plan, a fresh right or power to eat of the Tree of Life, and live for ever, after the resurrection from the dead, with his propitiated and reconciled Maker. In mercy, therefore, he was excluded from the garden of Eden, and from the original symbol of that eternal life, which was now to be sought after by other means, and represented by other sacraments. He was sent forth into the world to pass his time in toil, pain, and sorrow; in mourning, contrition, and penance; till death should set him free, and introduce him to the joys purchased and prepared for him by that blessed person, "in whom is Life, and the Life was the light of men." * The same divine person was always the source of immortality, however the sacred symbols, instituted to adumbrate it, have been varied under different dispensations. To our first parents, before the fall, he stood in the relation of Creator and Lord. To them, and to their posterity, since that sad catastrophe, he hath stood, and ever continued to stand, in the new relation of Saviour and Redeemer. The man who doth not now acknowledge him in this latter character, will find him, in the former, an avenger to execute wrath: and what wrath can be so fierce and terrible, as that of the Lamb? It is oil set on fire. The sinner unless he be in love with condemnation, must not revert to the first covenant, and aim at the acquisition of eternal life, on the foot of the law of works, or the performance of unflinching obedience. In this

* John 1. 4.

this case the rebel claims promotion, instead of suing for pardon. He puts forth his hand to the fruit of the now forbidden tree, which is no longer food for man. Its nature is changed, with our condition. To the eye of human pride it still looks fair and tempting; but its contents, when eaten, are ashes and sulphur; and immortality, without redemption, would prove the reverse of a blessing.

Such being the state of this matter, and the order of the divine œconomy concerning it, all that is said in the Scriptures from the fall downward, with regard to the new method of obtaining eternal life, and the appointed means of so doing, will throw light backward, and serve to illustrate the account already given of the Tree of life in Paradise.

To this end may be adduced the texts, which speak of the Redeemer, his religion, truth, grace, and salvation, under the very original expression of the Tree of Life.

And here, the first place is due to that charming description, left us by king Solomon, in the proverbs, of divine wisdom personified, and represented as having been with God in the beginning, yet rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, and delighting to be with the sons of men; as the way, the light, and the life; the author and giver of peace and comfort, joy and gladness; the Creator of all things, by whom the worlds were made, and without whom was not any thing made, that was made. —“Happy”—says the great teacher of Israel —“Happy is the man that findeth Wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her.
Length

Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a Tree of Life to them that lay hold upon her, and happy is every one that retaineth her."*

Thus, in another place—"The fruit of the righteous is a Tree of Life; and he that winneth souls is wise."† The fruit produced by the righteous, through grace, copious, fair, and well flavoured, like that which once grew upon the Tree of Life, invites all beholders to come and partake, with its owner, of that glory and immortality with which it shall one day be crowned. And surely he, who, by these means, winneth souls to righteousness and salvation, is wise indeed! He resembles the eternal Wisdom, the Son of God himself, who came down from heaven to win souls, when the fruit of the righteous was the true Tree of Life.

Again—"A wholesome, or healing tongue is a Tree of Life; but perverseness therein is a breach of the spirit."‡

If this be so, in what passes about the affairs of the present world, how much more, when the concerns of another make the subject of conversation? When we extend the Proverb to them, we cannot but think of the two capital instances, in which it was most signally verified. We detest the tongue, that "perverted" mankind from the path of life, and made a "breach in the spirit," at which sin entered, and death by sin. But everlasting benediction be upon that tongue, which spake, as no other ever did, or could speak, pardon, peace, and comfort to lost mankind. That was the Tree of Life, whose leaves were for the *healing* of the nations.

* Prov. iii. 13. &c.

† Prov. xi. 30.

‡ Prov. xv. 4.

tions. "With the *tongue* confession is made unto *salvation*."

Once more. "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick; but when the desire cometh, it is a Tree of Life."* This likewise is true, in temporals, of any object, long wished for, and at last possessed; but it is emphatically so of the hope of salvation, which, while it is deferred, maketh the heart sick; as we may find by the pathetic and forcible exclamations of those who waited for it in old time. But when the desire, that is, the object of the desire—he whom so many prophets and kings had earnestly desired to see, and did not see—he who was "the desire of all nations"—when he came, he proved the Tree of Life restored in the Paradise of God.

Two remarkable representations of things spiritual and divine under the Gospel dispensation, or in the kingdom of heaven, were exhibited to Ezekiel and St John. Let us compare them with each other, and both of them with the original scenery in Paradise, from which the images are evidently borrowed, and to which unless they are again referred, they lose half their beauty and significancy.

In Ezekiel's vision of the Christian church, under the figure of the second temple, he tells us, he saw "waters issuing from the sanctuary, and giving universal life, wherever they went."† St John saw "a river of water of life, clear as chrystal, proceeding from the throne of God and the Lamb."‡ And "a river," we know, "went forth," at the beginning, "to water and make glad the Garden of God, in Eden."

"On the banks of the river, on this side, and on that side," Ezekiel beheld "very many trees;" or as it should, perhaps, be rendered, "a very great tree,"

* Prov. xiii. 12.

† Ezek. xlvii. 1, 9.

‡ Rev. xxii. 1.

tree,"* "whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it (in the singular number) shall bring forth new fruit according to it's months; and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaves for medicine."† Let us now turn again to St John—"In the midst of the street of it"—the new Jerusalem, succeeding in the place of Paradise, and the old Jerusalem, with its temple and services—"in the midst of the street of it, and of either side the river, was there the Tree of Life, which bare twelve manner of fruit, and yielded its fruit every month; and the leaves of the Tree were for the healing of the nations."‡ Can we read either of these descriptions, without immediately carrying our thoughts back to Eden, where we see growing out of the ground, at the command of the Lord God, "every tree good for food, and pleasant to the sight, the Tree of Life also in the midst of the garden."

But let us take a view of some other figures and sacraments, ordained since the fall of man, as the Tree of Life was appointed before it, to represent to the faithful the blessing of immortality.

The lost blessing was to be recovered and restored to the human race by the sufferings and death of a surety, who, after dying for our sins, was to rise again, for our justification. The grand institution, therefore, of this kind, commencing immediately upon the fall, and continuing in force to the death and resurrection of Christ, was Sacrifice. A victim was brought to the altar, and being slain as a substitute for the offerer, first saved him from death, and then became food to support his life. And as Providence hath been ever careful to furnish us with continual memento's of the truths

most

* Gen. ii. 9.

† Ezek. xlvii. 12.

‡ Rev. xxii. 2.

most important and interesting to us, it seems to be a circumstance worthy notice, that since the use of animals for food, and those chiefly which were made choice of in sacrifice, the world subsisteth by shedding of blood, and the death of the innocent is daily the life of the guilty. This is an additional reason, why every meal should be "sanctified" according to the apostolical direction, "by the word of God, and by prayer,"* while the meat that perisheth reminds us, in so lively and striking a manner, of that which endureth unto eternal life. The history of the Paschal Lamb, with the preservation of Israel from the hand of the Destroyer, in that night to be remembered through all their generations, the night of their leaving Egypt, is a very particular, full, and beautiful exemplification of the nature and design of Sacrifice. "Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us;" and therefore we too "keep the feast."†

That miraculous supply of food, vouchsafed by God, to sustain his people, during their journey through the wilderness, till they came to the borders of Canaan, was another sign or symbol of immortal life, and its support derived from above. This new and extraordinary viand sprung not out of the earth, but came down, in rain, or dew, from heaven; white to the eye, sweet to the taste, and agreeable to every palate; given freely to all; proportioned to the necessities of each; and renewed day by day, till the sojournings of Israel were over, and the promised rest attained. St Paul, having occasion to speak of those events, which, as he expresses it, "happened unto Israel for examples,"‡ as figures or shadows of things spiritual and divine, mentions this miracle, with that

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* 1 Tim. iv. 5.

† 1 Cor. v. 7.

‡ 1 Tim. iv. 5.

of the water brought out of the rock, in the following terms—"They did all eat the same spiritual meat; they did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual rock, which followed them; and that rock was Christ."* Our Lord, in the sixth chapter of St John's Gospel, discoursing with the Jews upon this subject, says to them—"Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the TRUE bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he that cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world."† Christ here stileth himself the TRUE bread, plainly in opposition to that which was shadowy and figurative. He is the TRUE bread, which cometh down from heaven, and is given, day by day, to nourish and support the Israel of God, the camp of the saints, the church militant, during *her* pilgrimage in the world, till she shall come to the promised inheritance, the land of that everlasting rest, which remaineth for the people of God. There we shall find, and enjoy for ever, the truth and substance of this sacred figure. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the HIDDEN MANNA,"‡ that is, to partake of that "life," which is "hid with Christ in God;" as the golden vessel of Manna was laid up, for a memorial, in "the holy places made with hands."||

To the same purpose served that bread, called the *Shew Bread*, or *Bread of the Presence*, § set forth new, every morning, in the tabernacle, and temple, and denoting the sustenance to be communicated to the souls of men from the body of Messiah; to prefigure which body, it is well known, that both tabernacle

* 1 Cor. x. 3, &c. † John vi. 32. ‡ Rev. ii. 17.
 § Exod. xvi. 33. Heb. ix. 4. § לֶחֶם פָּנִים.

tabernacle and temple were constructed, under the direction of God himself.

Lastly—What the Tree of Life was to Adam in paradise; what Sacrifice in general was to the faithful, after the fall, from Abel downward; what the Paschal Lamb was to Israel quitting Egypt; what Manna was to that people in the wilderness; what the Shew Bread was in the tabernacle and temple; all this, and if there be any other symbol of like import, it is now briefly comprehended, during the continuance of the Christian church upon earth, in the holy Eucharist. The former were prefigurative sacraments, this is a commemorative one. They shewed forth the Messiah, and the life which is by him, until his first coming; this shews forth the same Messiah, and the same life, “until his coming again.” Excluded from the Tree of Life in Paradise, we are admitted to partake of the Bread of Life in the church. Lost by the covenant of Works, we are saved by that of Grace. A cheering voice calls to us from the sanctuary, “Draw near with faith, and take this holy sacrament to your comfort.” The elements are honoured with the names of the Body and Blood of Christ, because appointed to signify and convey, to the worthy communicant, the blessings purchased by his Body broken, and his Blood shed, upon the cross; blessings to the soul, like the benefits conferred upon the body by bread and wine; life, health, strength, comfort, and joy.

Such have been the different symbols and sacraments vouchsafed to mankind under different dispensations, all representing and shadowing out a glorious immortality in another and better world, where we shall sit down with the author and giver of it, at his table, to eat Bread, and drink of the

fruit of the Vine, new in his kingdom; where we shall give glory to the Lamb that was slain; where we shall partake of the hidden Manna, and eat the fruit of the Tree of Life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.

From the passages of Scripture thus laid together, the nature and design of the Tree of Life in Eden seem sufficiently clear. And, upon a review of what hath been said, it is impossible not to admire the consistency and uniformity running through both Testaments, from the second chapter of the Genesis of Moses, to the twenty-second of St John's Revelation, which so mutually illustrate and explain each other. The analogy of faith, in this instance, proclaims aloud the wisdom and harmony of the divine dispensations, from the creation to the consummation of all things.

At sundry times, in divers manners, and by various instruments, hath heaven conveyed instruction to man. But the instruction conveyed, with the terms and figures employed to convey it, bespeak, at all times, the hand of the same omniscient and beneficent author. They must be construed and expounded upon the same plan; and when rightly construed and expounded, will be found to terminate in the same awful and interesting objects, eternal life, and the means of its attainment. To these great ends serve the symbols of Paradise, the sacrifices of the patriarchs, the types of the law, the visions of the prophets, and the sacraments of the Gospel, with the numberless expressions and descriptions borrowed from them, and referring to them. These constitute a kind of *sacred language* peculiar to holy writ, and only explicable by it. The knowledge of this language is a science by itself, and the study of it well worthy the attention of such as have leisure and

and abilities to prosecute it, is its own rich and exceeding great reward. The subjects are of such infinite moment, that all others must in comparison, appear to be as nothing. And the dress, in which they are presented to us, is the most ornamental and engaging in the world. It is of that kind, to which both eloquence and poetry, among men, owe all their charms. The doctrines of Scripture are not proposed in a naked logical form, but arrayed in the most beautiful and striking images which the creation affords. *

A celebrated and well known author, whose essays have long been the established standard of true taste, and fine writing, makes, in one of them, the following observations——“By similitudes drawn from the visible parts of nature, a truth in the understanding is, as it were, reflected by the imagination: we are able to see something like colour and shape in a notion, and to discover a scheme of thoughts traced out upon matter. And here the mind receives a great deal of satisfaction, and has two of its faculties gratified at the same time, while the fancy is busy in copying after the understanding, and transcribing ideas out of the intellectual world into the material. It is this talent of affecting the imagination that gives an embellishment to good sense, and makes one man's compositions more agreeable than another's. It has something in it like creation, and bestows a kind of existence. It makes additions to nature, and gives greater variety to God's works. In a word, it is able to beautify and adorn the most illustrious scenes in the universe, and to fill the mind with more glorious shews and apparitions than can be found in any part of it.” †

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* See Lord Bacon's *Advancement of Learning*, B. vi. C. 3.

† Mr Addison's concluding paper on the *Pleasures of Imagination*, *Spectator* VI. N^o 441.

Perhaps it is impossible any where to meet with juster sentiments than these are, clothed in more apt and elegant expressions. And this single passage would have sufficed to establish the reputation so justly acquired by its author. The inference I would beg leave to make from it is this; If such be the case in human compositions, where similitudes are drawn by short-sighted man, to illustrate things temporal; what must it be, when they are drawn, to illustrate things eternal, by him, who has a perfect knowledge of the nature and properties of the objects from whence they are drawn, as well as of those to which they are applied; nay, who, doubtless created the visible world, among other purposes, for that, to which he himself, in his Revelations to mankind, has so continually employed it, that of serving as a picture, or representation of the world at present invisible? "Eye hath not seen," says an Apostle, "nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man to conceive the things that God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit;" * and the Spirit, knowing our infirmities, and whereof we are made, hath revealed them, from beginning, by external signs, symbols, sacraments, and a figurative language, supplied by them. Upon this very principle it is, that another acknowledged master of style and composition grounds the character of the sacred writings, considered in that view—"Eloquence (says he) is that which persuades: it persuades by moving; it moves by things, and palpable ideas only: and hence no eloquence is so perfect as that of the Scriptures; since the most spiritual and metaphysical things are there represented by sensible and lively images." †

* 1 Cor. ii. 9.

† ROLLIN, *Essays Letters*, ii. 360.—"To quarrel with our Maker

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In justification of this remark, let the appeal, in the instance now before us, be made to every one endued with sensibility. The position to be laid down is, that through the alone merits of the Redeemer, we now inherit eternal life. Is it possible for all the art of man to convey this truth in terms so pleasing and informing, as those few used by St John, with allusion to the scenery in Eden—"And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as chrystal, proceeding out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb. And in the midst of the street of the new Jerusalem, and of either side of the river, was there the Tree of Life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month; and the leaves of the Tree were for the healing of the nations."—

To whom, then, blessed Lord Jesus, should we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. Thou art the true Tree of Life, in the midst of the Paradise of God. For us men, and for our salvation, thou didst condescend to be planted, in a lowly form, upon the earth. But thy head soon reached to heaven, and thy branches to the ends of the earth. Thy head is crowned with glory, and thy branches are the branches of honour and grace. Medicinal are thy leaves to heal every malady, and thy fruits are all the blessings of immortality. It is our hope, our support, our comfort, and all our joy, to reflect, that, wearied with the labours, and worn out with the cares and sorrows of a fallen world, we shall sit down under thy shadow with great delight, and thy fruit shall be sweet to our taste!

Maker about this way of proceeding, would be to blame him for conveying truths to us in the most affecting and agreeable manner; or for creating us with those faculties, which are fitted to receive truths thus conveyed. For the most important truths, as we are framed at present, can make but a slight impression on the mind, unless they enter first like a picture, into the imagination, and from thence are stamped on the memory." PETERS, Crit. Diss. on the Book of Job, Part I. Sect. x.

DISCOURSE IV.

THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE.

GEN. ii. 17.

Of the Tree of the Knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat.

THIS is the first and the only law recorded to have been promulged in the state of man's innocence. It may therefore be reasonably supposed to have contained in itself the substance of many other laws. Its comprehension may be inferred likewise from its importance. The transgression of it occasioned the fall of the human race, and introduced the necessity of a redemption by the Son of God.

Could we ascertain with precision what is intended by *the knowledge of good and evil*, such a discovery might possibly furnish us with a key to this part of Scripture, and to the transactions relative to the trial of our first parents in Paradise. Let us therefore begin with an enquiry into the true meaning of these words.

By the knowledge of good and evil the generality of commentators understand *experimental* knowledge; and they suppose the name to have been given to the tree by a *prolepsis*, because, in the event, through man's transgression, it was to become the means of his attaining the experimental knowledge of evil; thus purchasing to himself a knowledge of good, manifested and illustrated by comparison

parison with its opposite; as a person is then said to understand the nature and value of health, when he has been deprived of it by sickness.

That such was the effect of the transgression, is certain: but it is not, perhaps so certain, that this is the right interpretation of the phrase, which is by no means peculiar to this place, but occurs in other parts of the sacred writings, where it cannot be taken in the sense assigned. Nay, there are two passages even in the third chapter of Genesis itself, which do not admit of such exposition. The tempter assures the woman, that, on eating the fruit, they should be as gods, "knowing good and evil." And the Almighty afterwards says, "Man is become like one of us, *knowing good and evil.*" Now the knowledge of good and evil possessed by the Deity cannot possibly be that produced by the experimental knowledge of evil. Let us examine into the usage of the words elsewhere.

In Deuteronomy we read—"Moreover your little ones which ye said should be a prey, and your children which in that day had no *knowledge of good and evil*, they shall go in thither."* Here, to know good and evil is, evidently, to know the nature of both, and so to form a judgment upon that knowledge, as to chuse the one, and refuse the other. Thus again the same sentiment is expressed in the well known passage of Isaiah, "Before the child shall know to *refuse the evil, and chuse the good.*"† And again, the woman of Tekoah says to David, "As an angel of God so is my Lord the king, to *discern good and bad,*"‡ that is, to distinguish, judge, and act accordingly. This last passage is similar to those before cited from Genesis, and must explain them; namely, "Ye shall be as gods,

* Deut. i. 39.

† Isai. vii. 15.

‡ 2 Sam. xiv. 17.

gods, knowing good and evil;" and, "Man is become like one of us, to know good and evil." It may be added, that a New Testament writer uses the words in the very same sense. For the Apostle, speaking of adults in Christianity, as opposed to babes in the faith, styles them such as have "their senses exercised to *discern good and evil*." *

Such being the plain and acknowledged import of the expression in other parts of the Scriptures, why should we suppose it to be different in the instance before us? Let us rather conclude it to be the same.

The question then will be, how could this Tree in the Garden of Eden confer a knowledge of good and evil? How could it enable man to discern the nature of each? How could it inform him which was to be pursued, and which to be avoided?

Shall we say, with the Jewish writers, that there was any virtue in the fruit, to clarify the understanding, and so to teach man knowledge? But if so, why was it prohibited? For the knowledge, which we suppose to be implied in the phrase, is perfective of man's nature; it is true wisdom; and if he really acquired it by tasting the forbidden fruit, he was much benefited by transgression. We must therefore determine, that the tree was designed to teach the knowledge of good and evil, or to be productive of true wisdom, not in a physical, but in a moral way. It instructed our first parents to fly from and avoid death, and the cause of death which must have been in some manner denoted by this Tree; as they were directed to chuse life, and the cause of life, signified to them by the other Tree, which bore that appellation.

The prohibition, being calculated for man's trial,

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* Heb. v. 14.

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was at the same time calculated to give him the information necessary for that purpose. Such is the nature and design of every law. It conveys the knowledge of good and evil by prohibiting the latter, and consequently enjoining the former. "By the law, says St Paul, is the knowledge of sin. I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet."* It is the law, in every case, respectively, which gives the knowledge of good and evil. Obedience to it is good, and the reward is life; disobedience is evil, and the penalty, death. And the trial of man, thus informed, is, whether he will obey or disobey; in order to the manifestation of the lawgiver's justice, wisdom, power, and glory, by rewarding or punishing him, as he does the one or the other. The difficulty lies here; Why an action to appearance so unimportant and insignificant, as that of eating or forbearing to eat the fruit of a Tree should have been appointed as the test of his obedience?

To solve this difficulty, let it be considered, that, beside those laws usually termed *moral*, and supposed to speak their own fitness and propriety, from an obvious view of the nature and constitution of things, it is not strange or uncommon for God to try the love and obedience of man by other precepts, styled *positive* and *ceremonial*. Such was the order for Abraham to quit his country, and kindred, and afterward, to offer his son Isaac: upon which latter occasion, notwithstanding the proofs before given by him of an obedient Spirit, God was pleased to say, "Now I know thou fearest God."† Such were the ritual observances regarding sacri-
ficate and other particulars, observed among the patriarchs, and afterwards, with additions, repu-
blished

* Rom. vii. 7.

† Gen. xxii. 12.

blished in form by Moses. Such are the injunctions to abstinence and self-denial, with the institutions of Baptism and the Lord's Supper among Christians. What hath been thus done under every other dispensation, was done likewise in Paradise.

And as touching these same precepts called *positive*, even they are not, what they are sometimes deemed to be, arbitrary precepts, given for no other reason, but because it is the will of God to give them. Thy carry in them a reason, which, though it may not be discoverable unless revealed, is yet nevertheless founded on the state of human nature, its relation to God, and its various wants, at different times, and in different situations. The observation, indeed, made by an eminent casuist* with respect to human laws, holds much stronger with respect to laws divine. "The obedience of that man is much too delicate, who insists upon knowing the reasons of all laws before he will obey them. The legislator must be supposed to have given his sanction from the reason of the thing; but where we cannot discover the reason of it, the sanction is to be the only reason of our obedience." This observation, I say, is most certainly a just one. But as a wise God acts not without the highest reason, so a gracious God, in his dispensations to his reasonable creatures, has, in many instances, with his commands, communicated the reasons on which they were founded, and has even condescended to argue with his people, on the justice and rectitude of his proceedings.

Services outward and visible have been enjoined. They have been always enjoined. But then they have always been symbolical of dispositions and actions inward and spiritual. When this is the case,
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* Bishop TAYLOR.

from unimportant and insignificant, they become the most important and significant transactions in the world. An uninformed person, living in the times of persecution under the heathen emperors, must have been, to the last degree, astonished and confounded, when told, that a Christian was in danger of eternal rejection from the presence of God, if he scattered a handful of incense on the fire; and that he was bound, by his religion, rather to die in torments, than submit to do it. But every objection vanishes in a moment, when we know, that such an action, in a Christian so circumstanced, was a token of renouncing his God and Saviour, and acknowledging a false object of worship.

To come a little nearer to the point in question. Know we not, that the action of *eating*, in particular, from the beginning, both among believers and unbelievers, has ever been esteemed and constituted an action symbolical of religious affection; and that, in the days of St Paul, a man denominated himself either one or the other, as he partook of the Lord's table, or the table of an idol? What were these, in the new Paradise, the church Christian, but the Tree of Life, and the Tree of Death? Why should it seem incredible, or absurd, that, in man's original trial, the same action should have been, in some manner, significative of the same affection? And if in that truly golden age of innocence, health, and felicity, the food allotted to man was of the vegetable kind, then the fruit of a *Tree* must of course be the subject of the prohibition. In after ages, under the law of Moses and the permission of animal food, the figurative system of rites was artificial and sanguinary; but in the sacred grove of Eden, that first tabernacle or temple, planted for a place of worship as well as of

abode, the whole of the religious scenery was composed of the beautiful and luxuriant productions of primeval nature, unstained with blood, when as yet there was no malediction upon the ground.

This consideration satisfies the mind, and removes every objection made to the nature, of the test, and the wisdom of God in appointing it. For if in this, as in other dispensations, the action of eating was intended to be symbolical of some mental disposition or affection, whether we can now ascertain particulars, or not, all the buffoonery of infidelity falls to the ground at once. The trial of Adam, like that of every other man, was, whether he would so far believe in God, as to look for happiness in obedience to the divine command; or would seek that happiness elsewhere, and apply for it to some forbidden object, of which the Tree must have been an emblematical representation.

You will ask, what that object was? And what information, as to the knowledge of good and evil, Adam could receive from the prohibition? By answering the last question, a way may, in some measure, perhaps, be opened for an answer to the first.

A due contemplation of the prohibition might naturally suggest to the mind of our first parent the following important truths; especially if we consider (as we must and ought to consider) that to him, under the tuition of his Maker, all things necessary were explained and made clear, how obscure soever they may appear to us, forming a judgment of them from a very concise narrative, couched in figurative language, at this distance of time.

Looking upon the Tree of Knowledge, then, and recollecting the precept of which it was the subject, Adam might learn, that God was the sovereign Lord of all things: that the dominion vested

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in man over the creatures was by no means a domination absolute and independent: that without, and beside God, there was no true and real good: that to desire any thing without and beside him, was evil; that no temporal worldly good, however fair and tempting its appearance, was to be fixed upon by man, as the source of his felicity: that the sole rule for choosing, or desiring things sensible, should be the will and word of God; and that good and evil should be judged of by that standard alone: that the obedience, which God would accept, must be paid with all the powers and affections of the mind, shewing itself careful and prompt in every the least instance: that man was not yet placed in a state of consummate and established bliss; but that such state was by him to be earnestly expected, and incessantly desired; and that he must take the way to it, marked and pointed out by God himself.*

These particulars seem to flow from the prohibition in an easy and natural train. And they lead us to answer the other question, namely, What was the object represented by the Tree of Knowledge? It was that object, on which man is prone to set his affections, instead of placing them on a better; it was that object, which, in every age, has been the great rival of the Almighty in the human heart; it was that object, which, in one way or other, has always been "worshipped and served rather than the Creator;" it was the CREATURE, the WORLD; and the grand trial was, as it ever hath been, and ever will be, till the world shall cease to exist, whether things visible, or things invisible, should obtain the preference; whether man should walk "by sight, or by faith." To know, this was

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* See VITRINGA—*Observat. Sacr. Vol. ii. Lib. iv. Cap. xii.* from whom many of the sentiments in this Discourse are borrowed.

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the knowledge of good and evil; and this knowledge came by the law of God, which said, "Thou shalt not covet." * Man's wisdom consisted in the observation of that law; but an enemy persuaded him to seek wisdom by transgressing it. He did so; and had nothing left, but to repent of his folly; a case that happens, among his descendents, every day, and every hour.

Let us, therefore, consider the Tree of Knowledge, in this light, with respect to its nature, situation, design, qualities, effects, and the knowledge conferred by it.

The fruit of this Tree was, to appearance, fair and pleasant; but, when tasted, it became, by the divine appointment, the cause of death. Now, what is it, which, in the eyes of all mankind, seems equally pleasing and alluring, but the end thereof, when coveted in opposition to the divine command, proves to be death? It is the World, with its pleasures and its glories, desired by its votaries, *per fas atque nefas*, to the denial of God, and to their own destruction. The Scriptures proclaim this aloud, and the experience of all generations confirms their testimony. Indeed, what is there in the universe, but the Creator and the Creature? And between whom, but them, can the contest subsist, for the love and obedience of man?

The Tree of Knowledge was situated in the midst of the garden, as was the Tree of Life. They stood near together, but they stood in opposition. The divine dispensations are always best illustrated by each other. Under the Gospel, Jesus Christ is the Tree of Life. What is it that opposes him, and, notwithstanding all that he has done, and suffered, and commanded, and promised, and threatened, is continually, by its solicitations, being ever present

* Gen. 2:17.

and at hand, seducing men into the path of death? Scripture and experience again join in assuring us, that it is the World. When we are in the house of God, which is Eden restored, engaged in hearing his word, and in the exercises of devotion, we sit down, as it were, under the shadow of the Tree of Life. No sooner are we gone from it, and too often even while we are there, the World intrudes, and draws off to other subjects our thoughts and our affections. What saith Moses under the law? "Behold I set before you, this day, life and good, death and evil; chuse ye."* Are not these the two Trees of Paradise? But imagination cannot form to itself a more exquisite and affecting piece of scenery upon this subject, than that exhibited by King Solomon in the book of Proverbs; a book, whose end and design is, to teach us the true knowledge of good and evil, that we may pursue the one, and avoid the other. In his vii. chapter, under the usual figure of an harlot, loosely decked in a profusion of vain ornaments, he introduces the World, or the false wisdom thereof, by its several fictitious charms, and meretricious blandishments, alluring the unwary to the chambers of destruction. In the succeeding chapter, by way of perfect contrast, appears, in the beauty and majesty of holiness, the offspring of the Almighty, the Son of the Father, the true and eternal Wisdom of God, with all the tender love and affectionate concern of a parent, inviting men to the substantial joys and unsfading pleasures of immortality, in the house of salvation. Again we are presented with the Tree of Death, and the Tree of Life. From Solomon let us pass to St Paul. "To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life. If ye

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* Deut. xxx. 15.

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live after the flesh ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." * Behold once more the Trees of Death and Life. Such, in good truth, is the face of things every where offering itself to view; such is the contest incessantly carrying on in this present World, which, on the one hand entices the children of Adam, by giving themselves up to its enjoyments, to taste the Tree of Death; while the Redeemer, on the other, still continues to cry aloud by his word, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the Tree of Life."

The Tree of Knowledge was designed to be the test of Adam's obedience, the subject matter of his trial. The World, with its desirable objects, is the test of our obedience, the subject matter of our trial, whether we will make it our chief good, or prefer the promise of God to it. Thus, the trial of Abraham was, whether he would quit his country, and kindred, and yield up his only son in obedience to the divine command, trusting to a recompence in reversion. The trial of Job was, whether he would still serve God, when deprived of his possessions, his family, and his health. After this sort, was our Lord Jesus Christ himself proved by the most powerful incitements of the human passions. Of the Tree of knowledge Satan tempted him to put forth his hand and take and eat, that the second Adam might be tried after the example of the first. The disciples also are tried in like manner with their blessed master. They are instructed to renounce the World, and deny themselves; which is only the original prohibition in other words; "Of the Tree of the Knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat."

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* Rom. viii. 6, 13.

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The apparent qualities of the forbidden tree are represented to have been these. It seemed "good for food, and fair to the sight, and a tree to be desired to make one wise." It is remarkable, that St John, laying before us an inventory of the World, and all that is in it employs, a division entirely similar. "Love not the world, says he, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the desire of the flesh, and the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the desire thereof; but he that doth the will of God abideth for ever." * Here is a picture of the fatal Tree, full blown, with all its temptations about it, drawn, by the pencil of truth, in its original and proper colours. The expressions tally, to the minutest degree of exactness. The "desire of the flesh" answers to "good for food;" the "desire of the eyes" is parallel with "fair to the sight;" and the "pride of life" corresponds with "a Tree to be desired to make one wise." The opposition between this Tree and the other is strongly marked, "If any man love the World, the love of the Father is not in him." And we are informed, that one leads to death, the other to life. "The World passeth away, and the desire thereof; but he that doth the Will of God abideth for ever." Precisely conformable, in every circumstance, was the threefold temptation of the second Adam. He was tempted to convert stones into bread for food, to satisfy "the desire of the flesh;" he was tempted with the kingdoms of the world and the glories of them, to satisfy "the desire of the eyes;" he was tempted to work a miracle on the

* 1 John ii. 15.

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the pinnacle of the temple, and to shew himself moving aloft through the air in the sight of the multitude, to display "the pride of life." He repelled the tempter, as our first parents should have done, and as we their children should do now, instead of judging according to appearances, by a firm and resolute appeal to the Revelation of God.

Thus, whether we consider the Tree of Knowledge as to its nature, its situation, its design, or its qualities, it seems to have been a very apt and significant emblem of the Creature, or the World, with its delights and its glories, the objects opposed, in every age, to God and his word. To reject the allurements of the former, and obey the dictates of the latter, is the knowledge of good and evil, and the true wisdom of man. So that the forbidden Tree in Paradise, when the divine intentions concerning it are explained from other parts of Scripture, teaches the important lesson more than once inculcated by Solomon, and which was likewise the result of holy Job's enquiries; "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to DEPART FROM EVIL IS UNDERSTANDING."

Whoever shall attentively reflect on the evidence which has been produced, and duly consider the perfect coincidence and harmony of the Scriptures and dispensations of God upon the subject, will, perhaps, be convinced, that, in the main, we must have fixed upon the true exposition of "the knowledge of good and evil," and the nature of man's original trial. There is a doubt, or difficulty, which offers itself and may seem to require a solution. It is this. We all know, as the state of human affairs is at present, by what manner, and by what temptations, the world solicits our desires after objects forbidden; but what temptation, you will

will say, could it hold forth to our first parents, existing alone, invested with sovereignty over it, and possessed of all its pleasures, and its glories, in the Garden of Eden? This question will, perhaps, be best answered, by asking one or two more. What temptation, then, let it be asked, could the World present to the people of God, when placed in the land of Promise, and blessed with every species of temporal felicity? What temptation can the World present to a pious Christian, placed by Providence in a state of affluence, and furnished with every good that his heart can wish for? The truth is, that the World, even supposing it to have been lawfully attained, and to be in ever so good hands, has *this* power of temptation; it may engage the attention of the human mind, and attract to itself the affections of the human heart, till, by degrees, its Maker is forsaken and forgotten. It may induce a man to consider it as an abode, and no longer to desire a removal to higher and better things with God above. "Beware, says Moses, lest when thou hast eaten, and art full, thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God."* This proved to be the case with the Israelites. It is the temptation too often fatal both to nations and individuals, when indulged by heaven with success and prosperity. And if the World, obscured as its brightness has been by the fall, can and does now produce such an effect on the wisest of those that are at any time favoured with a large share of it, how much more must it have been able to charm, and to deceive, when first formed in perfect beauty! Considering this circumstance, and withal, how "the Creature," in the earliest ages, was
" worshipped

* Deut. viii. 14.

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"worshipped and served, instead of the Creator" one is almost ready to think it possible, that Idolatry itself might take its beginning in Eden.

From the sad experience of those who have gone before us, let us learn to have recourse to the Law of God, for our *knowledge of good and evil*, and to refrain from the fruit of the forbidden Tree, the Tree of Death. Of this fruit, though proceeding from the same root, there have been different periods of time, agreeable to the turn and temper of each. In the days of the patriarchs, and of the Israelites, it was the worship of the material elements, or powers of nature, in the place of Him who made them, accompanied with every kind of impurity. Such was the religion of the revolted nations, and such the rites with which it was celebrated. Yet such a religion, and such rites, the people of God, for many ages, notwithstanding all that he did for them, and said to them, strange, as it may appear to us at present, were ever ready to adopt and embrace. They apostatised to idolatry, with the divine glory blazing before their eyes, on the top of Sinai. Nor could the wisest and greatest of their princes afterwards escape the contagion. This corruption, which the Babylonish captivity, like a well-applied caustic served to eat out, and to do away, was succeeded by a disease of another kind, but one that stuck to them, till it destroyed them; a mistake as to the nature of their œconomy; a confidence in externals; a deep hypocrisy; a spirit wholly secularized; an ambition to have all the kingdoms of the world subject to Jerusalem, and the wealth and glory of them centered there. "The desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life," were chosen in opposition to the celestial fruits of love and obedi-

cence,

ence, humility and charity, faith and holiness, produced among them by Jesus Christ, the Tree of immortality. "They put forth the hand, and tasted." But soon the exterminating angel dispossessed them of their Paradise, and they died the death.

Since the ascension of Christ, the heathen world has been converted to the Gospel, and that desert has become the garden of the Lord. But in this garden also—is there no Tree of Death? No specious fruit held forth, to entice the unwise to perdition? What is the doctrine, which, in some parts of Christendom, gives adoration to beings that are not God; or that, which, in others, denies it to Him who is so? What is the scheme, that asserts the non-necessity of a Divine Revelation, claiming to man the right, and attributing to him the power of making a religion for himself, and prescribing to his Maker the terms of his own acceptance? What is the atheistical policy, which excludes the Creator from the care of his works, and his Providence from the kingdoms of the earth? What is that system of paganism revived under the name and notion of *philosophy*, as opposed to Christianity, and every thing that is called Religion, by which either the Deity is materialized, or matter deified? What is that unbounded licentiousness in principles and manners, daily growing more and more into vogue, and shamelessly, by some of the new philosophers, defended in form? What is the luxury, the splendour, the extravagance, the dissipation, the abandoned profligacy, and ungodliness of the age?

Behold the flourishing state of the fatal Tree! View the extent of its branches, and the abundance of its fruit, in these latter days! But remember, that, still—the end is Death; to a nation, excision;

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to individuals, without repentance and faith, destruction everlasting from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, when he shall descend into his garden to make inquisition, and call offenders to their final account. Be not ye therefore deceived and seduced, however the temptation may seem "fair to the sight, and good for food;" however "desirable" it may be represented "to make you wise." Take your direction, through life, from the word of God, and be not prevailed upon to falsify, or transgress it. The conflict may be sharp, but it will be soon over; bear up resolutely under it; and for your consolation and encouragement in the hour of trial, when strongly solicited to taste the Tree of Death, listen to that strength-conferring voice, which crieth from the eternal throne, in words that will bear a repetition—"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the Tree of Life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God."

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DISCOURSE V.

THE PRINCE OF PEACE.

ZECH. ix. 9, 10.

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy king cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation, lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even unto sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.

THIS prophecy was delivered by Zechariah, five hundred years before the Advent of Christ. And St Matthew, in the Gospel appointed for this day, affirmeth it to have had its accomplishment, when our Lord entered Jerusalem, in the manner here described, amidst the acclamations of the attending multitude. "All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass." The prediction is of the literal kind, and it was literally and most exactly fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth. No other King, with these characteristic marks upon him, ever thus came to Sion, before him; and since the Jews rejected him, they have lost their temple,

their city, and their country; nor has there been any Sion, to which their King might come. Jerusalem would not rejoice, on the day when the prophet had enjoined her to rejoice; and therefore she hath had cause to mourn, from that day to this. The rulers of Sion were vexed and chagrined at beholding a scene, which should have excited them to shout aloud for joy. The disciples, indeed, exulted, and sang Hosanna to the Son of David. Could Messiah enter his capital, unacknowledged? That was impossible. Had men been silent upon this occasion, the buildings and pavements of the city must have supplied the defect, and borne their attestation to the promised and long expected King of Israel. "I tell you," replied our Lord to the Pharisees, who desired him to rebuke his disciples, "I tell you, that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out."

That we may perceive the full force and beauty of the prophecy before us, it will be necessary to shew its connection with the preceding part of the chapter, wherein it stands.

In this ix. chapter of his prophecy, Zechariah denounceth some of the divine judgments, which were executed by that scourge of heaven, Alexander the Great, when he over-ran Syria, took Damascus, burnt Tyre, destroyed Gaza, and, in imitation of his favourite hero, dragged the governor thereof at his chariot wheels. "The burden of the word of the Lord in the land of Hadrach, and Damascus shall be the rest thereof—And Hamath also shall border thereby, Tyrus and Sidon though it be very wise. And Tyrus did build herself a strong hold, and heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets. Behold, the Lord will cast her out, and he will smite her power

in the sea, and she shall be devoured with fire. Askelon shall see it and fear; Gaza also shall see it, and shall be very sorrowful, and Ekron: for her expectation shall be ashamed, and the king shall perish from Gaza, and Askelon shall not be inhabited." The prophet next foretelleth the mixture and incorporation of the Philistines, when thus humbled by Alexander, with their old enemies the Jews. "And a bastard," or, an alien generation, ~~(which say the Lxx)~~ "shall dwell in Ashdod; and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines; and I will take away his blood out of his mouth, and his abominations from between his teeth; but he that remaineth, even he shall be for our God, and he shall be as a governor in Judah and Ekron as a Jebusite." Amidst these revolutions and alterations of affairs in the world, God promiseth, in the next verse, to preserve his temple, while so many castles and strong holds about Jerusalem were overturned, so many cities swept of their inhabitants by the besom of destruction. "And I will encamp about mine house, because of the army, because of him that passeth by, and because of him that returneth: and no oppressor shall pass through them any more; for now have I seen with mine eyes." Then followeth the prophecy in my text—"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Sion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy King cometh unto thee; he is just and having salvation, lowly, and riding upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off; and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even unto sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth." As if the prophet had spoken in more words to Jerusalem thus—

“Thine eyes, in the generations following, shall behold the flourishing pride of sundry nations, each endeavouring to overtop others in height of glory and temporal state; each striving to keep others under, by human policy, or strength of war. And whilst the sight of their mutual conquests shall possess thy thoughts, thou wilt be ready, in the pride of thine heart, to say, Jerusalem and Judah one day shall have their turn, and in that day shall the sons of Jacob, the seed of Abraham and David, be like the monarchs of Greece and Persia, far exalted above the kings of other nations: every one, able to bear arms, glistering with his golden shield, and leading the princes of the heathen, as prisoners, bound in chains, and their nobles in fetters of iron. The beauty and riches of their costly temples shall deck the chariots of my children, which their captives shall draw in triumph. But thou shouldest remember, that the promised prince of peace, of benignity, and justice, should not be sought among the tumultuous hosts of war; ~~nor canst thou hope~~ that He, who is the Desire of all nations, should be thy Leader or General, to destroy those nations. It is glory and honour enough for thee, glory and honour greater than the greatest conqueror on earth could ever compass, that the King of kings and Lord of lords shall be anointed and proclaimed King upon the hill of Sion: that the inviolable decrees of everlasting peace shall be given to all the nations under heaven from thy courts. And therefore while horses and chariots and other glorious preparations of war shall present themselves to thy view, suffer them to pass as they come, and rest assured, that thy King, of whose coming thou hast often been admonished by the prophets, is not among them. The manner of his coming to thee,

so thou wilt mark it, bodes far better tidings to thee and all the nations besides, than can accompany the prosperous success of wars, or any victory obtained with blood. What king of Judah or Israel did ever levy an army, though in just defence of their country and people, on so fair terms, that no poor amongst them were pinched with taxes for the supply? What victory did they ever obtain so cheap, that many of their children were not forced to sit down with loss, many wounded, others maimed, and some always slain? But, lo, now I bring thee unusual matter of exultation and joy. For behold thy King cometh unto thee, whensoever he cometh, attended with justice for his guide, and salvation for his train. He shall execute judgment without oppression: he shall save thee, so thou wilt be saved, without destroying any, being able to make thy lame to go, to give life to thy dead, without hazard either of life or limb to any that rests within thy territories. Such shall be the manner of his coming, and such his presence, that the poorest wretch among thy children may think himself more happy, than any king of Judah or Israel which was before him, so he will but conform himself to the temper and demeanour of his Saviour. For he cometh unto thee poor and lowly, riding upon an ass, to wean thee from the vain hopes of the heathen, from which the prophets have so often dehorted thy forefathers. Some put their trust in horses, and some in chariots; but thy confidence must be in the Lord thy God, who will always be thy King, to defend thee, to protect thee, to strengthen thee through this weakness." *

Having thus taken a general view of the prophecy, proceed we to make some observations and

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reflections.

reflections upon the several parts of it, in the order in which they lie.

Beautiful and striking is the manner in which it is introduced. The prophet doth not coldly inform Jerusalem, that her King should come to her, and that, when he did come, she ought to rejoice. Rapt into future times, he seems to have been present at the glorious scene. Standing upon mount Olivet, he hears the Hosannas of the disciples, and beholds the procession approach towards the gates of Jerusalem: he turns himself to the city, and breaks forth in transport, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Sion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem!" Religion, then, hath its joys; a prophet calleth us to exult and shout; and often as this holy season returneth, the church secondeth his call. Her services dispel the gloom of melancholy, and put gladness into the hearts of all her children. They are wonderfully calculated to renew good impressions in our minds, to increase our faith, to invigorate our hope, to blow up the sacred fires of devotion and charity, and to fill us with all holy and heavenly tempers. They produce a joy "which no man taketh from us," and in which "a stronger intermeddleth not;" they inspire a pleasure which no pain can overcome, of which no time can deprive us, and which death will perfect and ensure to us for ever. Perverse Jerusalem rejected joy, and chose sorrow for her portion. Glad tidings came to the Gentiles, and were gladly received. The Christian church, formed of them, is now the daughter of Sion, and the new Jerusalem. To her the promises are transferred, and made good. She therefore obeyeth the prophet's injunction; she continually, with the holy Virgin, "magnifieth the Lord, and her spirit rejoiceth in God her Saviour."

The

The next words of our prophet assign the reason why Jerusalem was called upon to rejoice, namely, the approach of her King: "Behold thy King cometh unto thee." A person was to visit Jerusalem who should deserve to be emphatically styled "her King." The nations had their kings and conquerors, their Nebuchadnezzars and Cyrus's, their Alexanders and Cæsars; these appeared, in their turns, upon the stage, contending for the empire of the world. Each performed the part assigned him by an all-directing Providence, and then vanished away. Sion beheld all these changes, and still survived the commotions occasioned by them. The prophets had promised her a King, who should overcome her enemies, and triumph gloriously; who should erect, in the time of the fourth great monarchy, an universal and everlasting kingdom, and give laws to the world; nay, who should govern all things in heaven and earth. At the time predicted, not only Jerusalem looked for a completion of the prophecies, but the whole earth sat still, expecting that Judea should give her a King. And lo, the promised King of the Jews is born of the royal house and lineage of David. All the circumstances of his birth, the words of his mouth, and the actions of his life, demonstrate him to be the Messiah, foretold by the prophets from the beginning of the world. He cometh to his own, and Jerusalem is commanded to rejoice and shout; but his own receive him not, and Jerusalem turns a deaf ear to the voices of all her prophets, not suffering herself to believe that any thing said by them could refer to Jesus of Nazareth. Her heart was depraved and hardened: she demanded to be put in possession of the empire of this world; she despised the appearance of her King, with the acclamations

mations of an ignoble multitude, and soon nailed a SPIRITUAL monarch to the cross.

With how different sensations are the members of the church Christian affected, when they hear the words of Zechariah, "Behold, thy King cometh unto thee," and read the history of their accomplishment in the Gospel for this day. With inexpressible delight we carry back our thoughts to that happy æra, when the King of the Gentiles, as well as the Jews, made his appearance in the flesh. We join his train, we attend him in his progress towards Jerusalem, and seem to enter with him into the holy city, while "the multitude of those who follow after, cry, Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." When we behold this scene, as presented to our view at this season, we are taught to conceive by it a noble idea of Messiah, at his first advent, ushered into the church, as her Lord and King, the prophets going before, and the apostles following after him, all proclaiming and bearing testimony to Jesus, all singing Hosanna to the son of David, all pronouncing the blessedness of him, who thus cometh in the name of Jehovah. We know that this is He to whom all the prophets give witness, and that he hath fulfilled those things which were written of him. We know that he hath overcome our enemies, and triumphed gloriously; that he hath erected an universal and everlasting kingdom, and given laws to the world; nay, that he doth govern all things in heaven and earth. Of the manner in which he atchieved his victories, and of the nature and extent of his kingdom, we shall have occasion to speak, as we proceed to consider the character which our prophet hath drawn of this King of Israel.

rael. "He is just, and having salvation, lowly, and riding on an ass."

Righteousness, Salvation, and Humility, distinguish the person and reign of Messiah. Righteousness leads the way. "He is just, or righteous." St Stephen, in his apology to the Jews, affirmeth the prophets to have foreshewn the coming of Jesus, under the title of the Just One. "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers."* David, in spirit, thus addressed King Messiah, as we are assured by St Paul's application of the passage in the first chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews. "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."† Jeremiah describeth him as righteous himself, and as making others so. "The days come saith Jehovah, that I will raise unto David a Righteous Branch: and a King shall reign, and shall prosper, and shall execute Judgment and Justice in the earth—And this is his name whereby he shall be called, JEHOVAH OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."‡ And indeed, we seldom find the kingdom of Christ mentioned, but Righteousness is immediately mentioned, as the first fruits of it. Righteousness, the Astræa of the ancients, left the earth at the fall of Adam, and returned again to visit and to bless it, at the birth of Christ. He was conceived without stain, lived without sin, and died without guilt. He conversed in the world, yet contracted none of its pollution,

* Acts vii. 52.

† Ps. xlv. 5.

‡ Jer xxiii. 6.

tion, but, like his glorious emblem the light, passed through all things undefiled. His bitterest enemies, Jews and Gentiles, joined to attest his uprightness. "Have thou nothing to do with that just man,"* said the wife of Pilate. Pilate himself, upon the strictest examination, declared, "I find no fault in this man."† Judas, who had every possible opportunity of knowing the character of his master, cried, out, in agony of despair, "I have betrayed the innocent blood;"‡ and the Roman centurion, who watched at the cross, gave in his evidence, "Certainly, this was a righteous man."|| The kingdom which he came to establish was a kingdom of Righteousness. He called men from the ways of sin by his sermons, he allured them from its pleasures by his example, he cleansed them from its guilt by his blood, and rescued them from its power by his Spirit. Where the Gospel came, idolatry gave place to true piety; every holy and amiable temper was planted and flourished in the hearts of the regenerate; and to be a Christian, was to be every thing that was honest, and just, and good. Thus did Jesus of Nazareth answer his title of "the Just One," and convince himself to be the true "Melchisedeck," or "King of Righteousness." The Jews chose not to be the subjects of such a King, and declared, they "would not have this man to reign over them." Therefore the kingdom of God was taken from them, and given to a people bringing forth the fruits thereof. Be it our care, while we celebrate the advent of our King, not to forget this part of his character; and let us rest assured, that if we would be his subjects, as well as pass for such, and share

* Matth. xxvii. 19.

† Matth. xxvii. 4.

‡ Luke. xxviii. 4.

|| Luke xxiii. 47.

share the blessings of his reign, as well as talk of them, we must be like him. His subjects are his *children*; and none will be finally owned by him as such, who bear not impressed upon them the similitude of their *Father*.

Salvation is the next sign and token which Zechariah hath given us, whereby to know the King of Zion. "He is just, and having Salvation." He was to execute that part of the regal office, which consisteth in rescuing a people from their oppressors. Whoever reads the history of Israel, finds it to contain an account of many Saviours, raised up, at sundry times, for this purpose. Such were Moses, Barak, Gideon, Sampson, and many more in the ages after them. But no one of these was "He that should come." They, like the legal priests, "were not suffered to continue, by reason of death;" the church was still taught to "look for another" and a more glorious Saviour, in the latter days; the prophecies were full of the great Salvation which he should effect; so great, that, in comparison of it, former deliverances were not to be mentioned, unless as shadows and faint resemblances of that grand and complete one. At the time appointed, Jesus of Nazareth appeared in this character, and brought his credentials with him, the authenticity of which was fairly allowed by a master in Israel; "No man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God were with him." At the birth of Christ, an herald from heaven proclaimed him to the shepherds by this style and title. "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a SAVIOUR." And if tidings of Salvation are not tidings of joy, what tidings can be such? The greater the Salvation, the greater

greater ought to be the joy. And what is the deliverance of a single people from a temporal adversary, when compared with the Salvation of the whole world from the oppression of the spiritual enemy; from sin, and sickness, and sorrow, and pain, and death, and hell? This was the Salvation which Jesus undertook to effect; and his miracles declared him equal to the mighty task. He forgave sin, he healed sickness, he dispelled sorrow, he removed pain, he raised the dead, he cast out devils. Had not the prophet reason to cry out, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy King, behold, thy righteous Saviour cometh unto thee?" But the daughter of Zion would have shut her gates against this righteous Saviour; the daughter of Jerusalem renounced her part and portion in such Salvation. She had set her heart upon being great in this world, whereas Christ came to make her so in another. And whenever Christians shall resemble Jews in the turn of their affections, whenever they shall regard religion only as a means of aggrandizing themselves upon earth, in their hearts they will entertain the same notion of the Salvation of Jesus, and the same contempt for it, that the Jews did. But let the sufferings of Jerusalem warn us, that we share not in her guilt, lest we share also in her punishment, and come into the same condemnation. We acknowledge for our Saviour the person whom Israel rejected. Let us not mistake the nature of his Salvation. "He shall be called JESUS," saith the angel to his holy mother, "for he shall *save* his people from their sins." *

As the Salvation to be wrought by King Messiah was to be so different from that wrought by all other

* Matt. i. 21.

other kings and conquerors, different likewise was to be his appearance and demeanour. "Behold, thy King cometh unto thee; he is just, and having salvation, lowly, and riding on an ass." This is demonstration against the Jews, that how great soever, in the end, the external glory of Messiah is to be, (and neither they nor we can set that too high) yet he was once to visit his people in great humility; he was to appear, at his first advent, in a state of humiliation. The nature of his undertaking required it, and their own law and prophets are clear and express upon the subject. Though God, he was to become man; "A virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and they shall call his name IMMANUEL, which is, being interpreted, GOD WITH US."* He was to be "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;" a man without "form or comeliness,"† without the glare of outward splendor to recommend him; "his visage," on the contrary, by suffering affliction, was to be "marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men."‡ He was to keep the law, and to die for sin. "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not—burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said I, lo I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me; I delight to do thy will, O my God, yea thy law is within my heart. || He made his soul an offering for sin; he was cut off out of the land of the living; he made his grave with the rich."§ If words can render any thing plain, it is plain from these passages, that Messiah was to be an humble and a suffering character. The types and the prophecies are as positive for his humiliation, as they are for his exaltation; nor

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could

* Isai. vii. 14. Matt. i. 23. † Isai. liii. ‡ Isai. lii. 14.

§ Ps. xl. 7. Heb. x. 7.

§ Isai. liii.

could any one person accomplish them all, without being equally remarkable for lowliness and meekness, glory and honour. The modern Jews, sensible of this, have framed to themselves two Messiahs; one, Ben Joseph, of the tribe of Ephraim, designed to be poor and contemptible, and to undergo great indignities; the other, Ben David, of the tribe of Judah, who is to be victorious, to conquer all the earth before them, and to live for ever in temporal grandeur. This idle dream, contrary to the tenor of the whole Old Testament, and unknown to their expositors before Christ came, shews us, that blindness hath happened to Israel not for want of light, but because they have shut their eyes against it till they cannot now open them, to behold the brightness of its shining; to view Jesus of Nazareth, as the end of their law, and the accomplishment of their prophecies. To an unprejudiced person, acquainted with that law, and those prophecies, the sight of the lowly Jesus, entering Jerusalem in great humility, and in still greater, bowing his head and expiring on mount Calvary, is a no less striking evidence of his being the Messiah, than his glorious resurrection from the dead, and triumphant ascension into heaven. The Scriptures must needs be fulfilled, in one respect, as well as the other. Thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and thus it behoved him to humble himself, in order to his suffering. Through pride Adam fell, and therefore by lowliness must Christ be exalted. "An haughty spirit goeth before a fall; but before honour is Humility."*

In this state of meekness and lowliness, was Christ to gain a complete victory over the enemies of man's salvation. The warfare was new, and it is no wonder, that the weapons employed in it should be un-

common.

* Prov xviii. 12.

common. Other warriors prepare their horses and their chariots, their bows, their spears, and their shields. But Messiah disarms his followers, in order that they may overcome. For thus our prophet goes on: "And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: And he shall speak peace unto the heathen." Could a plainer declaration have been made, that the conquests of Messiah were not to be of a secular nature; that his kingdom was not of this world? "If my kingdom were of this world," saith he himself, "then would my servants fight." * But lo, he taketh from them the weapons of war. Was there a shield or sword seen among the thousands of the Israel of God? No shield, but that of faith; no sword, but that of the Spirit. Like their great leader, they encountered their adversaries with patience, and overcame by suffering. So far was the advent of Christ from carrying with it any appearance of war, that the nations at the time lay hushed in the tranquillity of an universal peace. "He spake peace to the heathen," as well as to his own people the Jews. The waves of this troublesome world ceased to toss themselves, and a delightful calm seemed to forebode the approach of those halcyon days, when the Prince of Peace should make his abode amongst us; like the stillness of that hallowed night, on which the angelic choir descended, to sing "Peace on earth;" peace with God, by the pardon of sin; peace with ourselves, by the answer of a clear conscience; peace with one another, by mutual charity. O divine Peace, how lovely and how pleasant dost thou appear! How happy and heavenly is the kingdom of Messiah, where thou art to be found! Who

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* John xviii. 36.

would not wish to see, who would not labour to promote the full accomplishment of the last clause of the prophecy we have been considering, in the extension of this kingdom and dominion of Christ "from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth;" that so all the nations of the world might remember themselves, and turn to the Lord Jesus, as many did at the first preaching of his Gospel. And let the daughter of Zion lead the way, restored to her pre-eminence among the churches. We will not envy her the honour, as she formerly envied us Gentiles, but rather rejoice and shout with her, in the day when she shall be led to acknowledge her King; the King of Righteousness, Salvation, and Peace; the once lowly, but now highly exalted Jesus of Nazareth; who, as at this time, came to visit us in great humility, and shall come again, at the appointed hour, to judge the world; when we shall behold him, glorious as Jerusalem herself can wish, riding upon the heavens in power and majesty unutterable, amidst the acclamations of saints and angels.

DISCOURSE VI.

THE KING OF GLORY.

REV. i. 7.

Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him; and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.

It is the peculiar supputation of the Christian church, as a pious writer well observes, to begin the year, and to commence the annual course of her services, at this time of Advent, herein differing from all other accounts of time whatsoever. The reason of which seems plainly to be this, because in the numbering her days, and measuring her seasons, she does not so much regard the sun in the firmament, as the great Sun of Righteousness, her Lord and Saviour, who is in heaven. She considers herself as “redeemed from the earth;” and therefore no longer confined to the calculations of the world, or obliged to direct herself by the courses of the material luminaries. It is her employment to make known to her children the time of salvation, called in Scripture, “the year of the redeemed;” and this year was introduced by the everlasting day-spring from on high visiting her; whereby she became, what the Spirit styles her, in the Revelation, “a city that has no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it, for the

Lord God and the Lamb are the light and the glory thereof."

The lessons and services therefore for the four first Sundays in her liturgical year propose to our meditations the twofold Advent of our Lord Jesus Christ, teaching us that it is he who was to come, and did come to redeem the world; and that it is he also, who shall come again, to be our judge. These two Advents involve in them and comprehend between them the whole counsel of God for the redemption of mankind, by the coming of Christ in the flesh, with the final issue of that counsel in respect of each individual, to be manifested at his coming to judgment.

The end proposed by the church, in setting these two appearances of Christ together before us, at this time, is, to beget in our minds proper dispositions to celebrate the one, and expect the other; that so, with joy and thankfulness, we may now "go to Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us" even the Son of God come to visit us in great humility; and thence, with faith unfeigned, and hope immoveable, ascend in heart and mind to meet the same Son of God in the air, coming in glorious majesty, to judge the quick and dead.

And certainly, if any thing can lead men to repentance, and turn the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of that Just One, the wisdom which maketh wise unto salvation, through faith in Christ Jesus, it must be the united considerations of his mercy, and his justice: his infinite mercy during the day of grace, when all sins, that can be repented of, are forgiven unto men; his inexorable justice at the day of retribution, when he shall infallibly render unto every man according as his work shall

shall be. And perhaps there is no better method of stirring up our wills to procure an interest, or of discovering the interest we already possess in the love of Christ, than by viewing in their proper colours the terrors of his judgment, as they will shew themselves to the astonished world at that awful hour of his second Advent; when the mask put upon false principles and evil actions shall drop off, and all things be estimated by the measures of Christianity, and the standard of the Gospel of Jesus.

The words of the divine and well beloved John now read are, it is presumed, not improper for this purpose, as they evidently fall in with the design of our church at this season, and speak the same language with her Advent services—"Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him; and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen."

In these words we may observe,

- I. Christ's Advent to judgment, with the manner of it; "Behold, he cometh with clouds."
- II. The circumstance of the world's beholding him, and the effect it shall produce; "Every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him."
- III. The faith and hope of the church, displayed by her wishing and praying for his manifestation, notwithstanding all the terrors that are to attend it; "Even so. Amen."

I. Then we are to consider Christ's Advent to judgment. There is something wonderfully awful and affecting in the short description the text gives us of it. The beautiful manner, particularly, in which
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it is introduced, is worthy notice. St John, having occasion to mention his dear Lord and master, at whose command he wrote this epistle to the churches, fired and transported at the glorious name, runs on with amazing rapidity, enumerating the blessings of the Redemption which is by him; and having carried him from his cross to his throne, and ascribed all glory to him sitting upon it, immediately he sees him in the clouds, and breaks forth in the words of the text. The whole passage runs thus; "John to the seven churches, which are in Asia, Grace be unto you, and peace from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven spirits which are before his throne; and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten from the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth; unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his father; unto him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.—Behold, he cometh!" It is evident likewise, at first sight, how well this sudden and abrupt introduction is calculated to awaken our attention to what follows. "The corruptible body, alas, presseth down the soul that museth on many things," and especially when it museth on the things of eternity. Multitudes lie asleep in their sins, amused with delusive dreams; dead to their true views and interests, as a corpse sleeping in the dust is dead to the views and interests of this life. Therefore the Holy Spirit, about to make proclamation of Christ's second Advent, first sounds a trumpet in Sion, and an alarm in the holy mountain, and ushers it in with an emphatical—*Behold!* which, like the voice of that wakeful bird that gives the first notice of the approach of the morning, and as a prelude

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prelude to the Archangel's trump, which is to give notice of the last morning that shall ever rise upon the world, is designed to awaken a careless and indolent generation out of its lethargy, importing the same in this place, with those other frequent calls of the apostles and prophets—"Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. Arise, shine, for thy light is coming, and the glory of the Lord is rising upon thee."

"Behold he cometh!" And is not this a sight most worthy of our attention? Is it not very meet, right, and our bounden duty, that we should behold it? That we should open the eyes of our faith, which the bewitching cup of pleasure and vanity, mingled by a deceitful world for our destruction, has charmed to sleep? That we should "lift up our heads, and look up, to see our redemption drawing nigh?" For draw nigh it will and it does, whether we consider it, or not. Every evening takes a day from the world's duration. The portion of the wicked is so much less, and the time of their punishment so much approached. The sufferings of the patient so much diminished, and their hopes of deliverance so much increased. Nay, every clock that strikes bids us recollect, that the promise of Christ has then received an additional force; "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." The precise day and hour knoweth no man. Though probably, as it was at his first Advent, so likewise will it be at his second. The faithful servants, who are watching for the return of their Lord, and "looking for redemption in Jerusalem," will be able, by the books or the Scriptures, and the signs of the times, to tell when the day is approaching. But what avails a curious
disquisition

disquisition upon the exact period of the world's dissolution? What is likely to be the fate of those malefactors, who, instead of preparing for their trial, spend the small portion of time allotted them, in disputing with each other concerning the hour in which the trumpet shall sound, and the judge make his entry? In this, above all other cases, "blessed is the man that feareth always. Blessed is that servant, who, whether his master cometh at the second watch, or whether he cometh at the third watch," is ready to receive him, and exhibit his accounts. Blessed, in short, is he, and he only, who hears continually these words of the beloved John; "Behold, he cometh."

He cometh, indeed! But how changed? How different his appearance, from what it once was? How shall we be able to conceive of it as it deserves, to raise our thoughts from the voice of the tender babe in the manger, bewailing our sins that brought him thither, to the voice of the Son of God, from which the heavens and the earth shall fly away, and no place be found for them any more for ever! Yet so it is. Behold, he who came in swaddling clothes, cometh with clouds. He who came to preach the day of salvation, cometh again to proclaim the day of vengeance. He who was led as a lamb to the slaughter, leads his ten thousands to the prey, as the lion of the tribe of Judah. He who cried not, nor lifted up his voice against his enemies upon earth, thunders with the glorious voice of his excellency against them from heaven. He who never brake a bruised reed, rules the nations with a rod of iron, and breaks them in pieces like a potter's vessel. He who quenched not the smoking flax, extinguishes the great lights of the world; darkens the sun, and turns the moon into blood;

blood; commands the stars from their stations, and the dead from their graves; shakes the powers of heaven, and the foundations of the earth, and all hearts, that are not fixed on him.

The trumpet sounds, and he is coming! The everlasting gates of heaven, which lifted up their heads for the King of Glory to enter in, are again lifted up; and behold the procession that comes forth of them, descending to this lower world, as it is described by one who saw it in a vision. I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse, and he that sat upon him was called faithful and true," the accomplisher of all his promises; "and in righteousness he doth judge" the world, and "make war" against all that oppose him. "His eyes were as a flame of fire," discerning and destroying the counsels of his adversaries; "and on his head were many crowns;" all the kingdoms of this world were become his; "and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself," the ineffable name of the divine essence. "And he was clothed with a vesture dipt in blood," the garment of vengeance. "And his name," by which he is known to men, "is called, THE WORD OF GOD. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses," attending him in his glory, "clothed in fine linen white and clean," which is the righteousness of saints. "And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword," namely, his holy word, "that with it he should smite the nations. And he shall rule them," that have rejected the golden sceptre of mercy, "with a rod of iron. And he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."

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When Joshua, at the head of the armies of Israel, surrounded Jericho, at the sound of the trumpet, the walls fell flat. When the divine Joshua, at the head of the armies of the true Israel of God, the church triumphant, surrounds this city of destruction, can the event be otherwise? Affuredly it cannot. The strength, beauty, and glory of the world will fall, and come to nothing, at the moment when the trumpet, sounding from the one end of heaven to the other, shall give notice, that the judge of all the earth is coming to his judgment-seat in the air. The throne that shall be there erected for him is thus described by Daniel—"I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the antient of days did sit; whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool. His throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire; a fiery stream issued, and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The judgment was set, and the books were opened." In the clouds over our heads is this judgment-seat to be formed, as it is also written in the book of Psalms—"Clouds and darkness are round about him, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." From amidst this thick darkness the lightnings, those swift executioners of divine vengeance, shall flash abroad over the earth while ten thousand thunders, rolling forth from the glorious God that maketh them, shall at once utter their tremendous voices: as it is written again in the same book of Psalms—"Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence," as once, when like a sheep dumb before his shearers he opened not his mouth. "A fire shall now devour before him, and it shall be very

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very tempestuous round about him. The Lord," even the Lord Jesus, "shall thunder out of heaven, and the highest give his thunder, hail stones and coals of fire." By the brightness of his coming all enemies shall soon be consumed, all clouds shall pass away; and the judge shall appear upon his radiant throne, like his emblem the sun; so that there shall not be a tongue but must own with the church, in her triumphant song, "Heaven and earth are full of the majesty of thy glory." And as Christ upon his throne, like the sun, will see all, so, like the sun, he will be seen of all, which brings us to the

II. Thing to be considered, namely, the circumstance of mankind beholding him, with the effect it shall produce upon them; "Every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him, and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him."

The judge being seated on his throne, and all things subdued to him, "before him, shall be gathered all nations," all the innumerable multitudes of men and women that have lived in every age, and every country. Every eye shall see the God that made it, and commanded it to be pure, and single. How it has fulfilled his commandment, will then be known. The Sight of Christ upon his throne will be a trying sight; the effects of it will enter the heart like the piercings of a sword, and reveal all its thoughts in the countenance; hypocrisy shall then be no more. "Every eye shall see him." But who shall be able to endure the sight? Even "they that pierced him" must "look on him whom they pierced." Pilate will behold the poor, despised Galilean, whom he scourged, and delivered to be crucified, now ready to judge him, and all the world. Herod and his men of war, who mock-

ed and set him at nought, will see him encompassed with ten thousands of saints and angels, about to speak unto them in his wrath, and trouble them in his fore displeasure. A corrupt temporising Sanhedrim, who were instant with loud voices that he might be crucified, will see heaven and earth flie away before the face of that priest, of whom they, his representatives, were the betrayers and murderers. They who plaited and put on the crown of thorns, shall be struck blind with rays of glory beaming from his sacred head. And they who drove the nails, and he who thrust the spear into his side, shall see that same Jesus, whom they pierced, exalted above every name that is named in heaven and earth.

But think not that the Jews, who crucified Christ, are the only persons that will have reason to tremble at this sight. There are others, who may dread it, as well as they. Those, whose sins, yet unrepented of, sharpened the nails, and pointed every thorn. Those careless ones, who are at ease; whose hearts, harder than the rocks, that rent asunder at his crucifixion, remain unmoved at the sight of the Son of God, dying upon the cross for them, and calling from thence to a thoughtless world—"Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger."

Bishop Taylor, in one of his Advent sermons, has an expostulation with a sinner upon this subject, which is so just, beautiful, and affecting, and so infinitely beyond any thing I can offer, that I shall not only have your pardon, but your thanks, for reciting it. "It was for thy sake that the judge did suffer unspeakable pains, such as were sufficient

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to reconcile all the world to God. And to consider that thou hast, for thy own particular, made all this in vain and ineffective? that Christ thy Lord and judge should be tormented for nothing; that thou wouldest not accept felicity and pardon, when he purchased them at so dear a price; it must needs be an infinite condemnation to thee. How shalt thou look upon him that fainted and died for love of thee, and thou didst scorn his miraculous mercies? How shalt thou dare to behold that holy face which brought salvation to thee, and thou didst turn away, and fall in love with death, and deformity, and sin? And yet, in the beholding that face, consists much of the glories of eternity. Surely all the pains and the passions, the sorrows and the groans, the humility and poverty, the labours and the watchings, the prayers and the sermons, the miracles and the prophecies, the whip and the nails, the death and the burial, the shame and the smart, the cross and the grave of Jesus, shall be laid upon thy score, if thou hast refused the mercies and design of all their holy ends and purposes. And if thou rememberest what a calamity that was, which broke the Jewish nation in pieces, when Christ came to judge them, for their murdering him, who was their king, and the prince of life; and considerest, that this was but a dark image of the terrors of the day of judgment, thou mayest then apprehend, that there is some strange unspeakable evil in store for one who refuses the salvation of Jesus, and rather chuses that Satan should rejoice in his destruction, than that Jesus should triumph in his felicity."

Thus far this excellent prelate. And all who consider the matter in this its true and proper light, cannot wonder at the effect which, as St John in

the text tells us, the sight of Christ will produce among the kindreds of the earth. They shall wail because of Christ, when they see him whom they have pierced by their sins, and crucified afresh. And that wailing must needs be terrible, when millions of men and women shall at the same instant fearfully cry out, and the noise shall mingle with the trumpet of the Archangel, and the thunders of the dying and groaning heavens passing away with a great noise, and the roaring of the flames in which the earth and all the works that are therein shall then be dissolving. The terror and lamentation throughout the world at that time, with the foreboding pangs and convulsions of departing nature, will be such as never were, since the day that God created man upon the earth. Include in your idea the destruction of the old world by the flood, the overthrow of the cities of the plain by fire and brimstone, and the desolation of Jerusalem by the Roman armies, with an assemblage of the plagues of Egypt, and the miseries and calamities felt by men in all ages, yet your conceptions will fall as far short of the things themselves, as the shadow does of the substance. Nothing can exceed our blessed Lord's description of this last scene, but its actual accomplishment—"There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth; for the powers of the heaven shall be shaken. And then shall appear the sign of the son of man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory." At this most awful

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and tremendous hour, when the son of man shall display his banner the cross in the clouds; when the sea and the waters of the great deep shall roar; when the destroying angel shall again go forth at midnight into the land of Egypt, and there shall be a great cry throughout all the land, because of death and judgment; then shall be brought to pass that which is written in the Revelation; "I beheld when the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every freeman hid themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?"

A view of the terrors of the Lord has by this time, perhaps, made us all ready to join in asking this last question? "Who shall be able to stand?" And we cannot help taking up our parable with Balaam; "Alas! who shall live, when God doth this?" But thanks be to God, an answer will be abundantly ministered unto us by a consideration of the

III. And last point proposed, namely, the faith and hope of the church, who wishes for Christ's manifestation, notwithstanding all the terrors that are to attend it, as appears by the remaining words of my text—"Even so. Amen."

For these are not the words of St John only, but they carry in them the prayers and sighs of Christians, sent up to the throne of grace through him. It is not "the Spirit" alone, speaking by him, that says "Come," but "the bride," or church, also says the same. "How long, O Lord, holy and true," is the voice of the departed spirits, resting

from their labours under the altar in heaven, and waiting for the completion of their glory, at the day of their Redeemer's triumph. And that part of the church which is still militant, and sojourns in the wilderness, may be heard earnestly joining in the same expostulation, in the lxiv. chapter of the prophet Isaiah; "O that thou wouldst rent the heavens, that thou wouldst come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence; as when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil; to make thy name known to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence. When formerly thou didst terrible things, which we looked not for, thou camest down, the mountains flowed down at thy presence." Nay, we ourselves, every one of us, daily put up the very same petition to God, when we pray that "his kingdom may come:" for his kingdom of glory cannot come, till all these things shall have been brought to pass. And again, when, standing at the grave's mouth, we have before our eyes a plain proof, that "man who is born of a woman, hath but a short time to live" in this world; we earnestly beseech the Father of Spirits, "that it would please him of his gracious goodness shortly to accomplish the number of his elect, and to hasten his kingdom." Thus the coming of that day, in which "all the kindreds of the earth shall wail," is the constant subject of the wishes and prayers of the sons of God. A sound Christian faith gives them confidence towards God, and teaches them, without hypocrisy, to pray for the second Advent of Christ. For although in that day "he cometh with clouds," yet God's promise is, that whenever "he brings his cloud" over the earth, his "bow shall be in the cloud," the sure token of the "everlasting covenant

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nant of mercy between him and all flesh." And accordingly, when Ezekiel and St John saw Christ upon his terrible throne, he appeared encompassed with a RAINBOW, to teach us that even the throne of judgment is incircled by mercy, which rejoices against judgment. All the cries of despairing nations, the thunders of heaven, and the horrible noises of the perishing earth shall not keep those, who have been indeed the disciples of Jesus, from hearing a voice saying unto them, "Come up hither." Yea, and they who in faith and patience have waited for the Lord, as the prophet Isaiah speaks, "shall then renew their strength, they shall mount up as eagles." They shall ascend to meet their Redeemer in the air, and the eye of faith shall steadfastly behold the glories of the Sun of Righteousness. Marvel no longer then that the church so passionately desires the manifestation of Christ. Marvel not that she should say, COME! when the Advent of him to whom she speaks is to be the day of her espousals, and the day of the gladness of her heart; the end of her Saviour's sufferings, and her faith; a day of triumph, and everlasting felicity. Let the men of the world lament, for their joy is ended, and their sorrows beginning; but let the redeemed be glad, for their sorrows are at an end, and their joys beginning. Let the "tribes of the earth mourn," but "let Israel rejoice in him that made him, and let the children of Sion be joyful in their king." For the trumpet which proclaims the destruction of the ungodly, declares at the same time the salvation of the righteous. When that *trumpet* sounds throughout the land, the eternal *jubilee* is begun. There is liberty for the captives, and the opening of the prison doors, even the gates of the grave, for those to come out, who lie there
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in darkness, and in the shadow of death; and every child of God is free to return to his possession and inheritance, and to the family of his heavenly Father. When they who have loved the world, instead of him whom the world crucified, and trusted in the false glory and riches of earthly Babylon, shall "stand weeping and wailing, to see the smoke of her burning, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in purple, and fine linen, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones; how in one hour is so great riches come to nought? —What saith the Spirit to the church? "Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy Apostles and Prophets, for God hath avenged you on her." And what saith the church herself? "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever. Hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad, and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready."

And now, my brethren, whose heart does not burn within him, when he hears the melody of the celestial choir chanting forth the praises of their victorious Redeemer, round his glorious throne? Is there a single person here, whose soul has not a desire and longing to enter into the courts of the Lord, and to bear his part in the never-ending chorus? But know, O man, whosoever thou art, that hast this desire and longing, know thou must be a penitent upon earth, before thou canst be a saint in heaven. Thou must be holy in time, if thou wouldst be glorious in eternity. Acquaint now therefore thyself with God, and be at peace with him, thyself, and all mankind; thereby, and thereby

thereby only, shall good come unto thee at thy latter end. Stop not thine ears, and harden not thine heart against instruction, when it is the day of trial and probation in the wilderness. Receive now, I pray thee, the law of the most High; retire, and meditate upon it, and lay up his words in thy heart; nor suffer the world to rob thee of that wisdom which is more precious than rubies, and to which all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared. Fear not, neither be dismayed, because of the multitude of thy past transgressions, which present themselves to thy troubled conscience, and set themselves in array against thee. God can forgive, if thou canst repent. Nay, he will "give thee repentance unto life," if thou wilt request it of him. If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt yet be built up, and impossible as it may appear, thou shalt put away iniquity far from thy tabernacle: thou shalt cease to do evil, and learn to do good; thou shalt cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life: thou shalt have thy delight in the Almighty, and lift up thy face unto God: thou shalt make thy prayer unto him, and he shall hear thee; he shall not lay thy sins to thy charge, but forgive thee what is past, and give thee grace to amend thy sinful life; to decline from the ways of the destroyer, in which, perhaps, thou hast unhappily wandered, and incline to the paths of wisdom and righteousness, and walk therein before him all the days of thy life. And when the work shall be finished, for which God sent thee into the world, even the work of thy salvation, thou wilt perceive, that to depart and to be with Christ is far better than to live here in possession of all that the world can give thee. Thou shalt go
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out with joy, and be led forth with peace by angels, who shall convey and welcome thy spirit to the regions of the living, to the bosoms of our holy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whence sorrow, grief, and lamentations are banished away, where the light of God's countenance visits and shines continually. And when the trumpet shall sound, and all the tribes and kindreds of the earth shall wail, thou shalt lift up thy voice and sing for the majesty and glory of thy triumphant Lord, and call to the heavens and the earth to bear thee company—"Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea make a noise, and all that is therein; let the field be joyful, and all that is in it; then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord; for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth, and with righteousness to judge the world, and the people with his truth. He which testifieth these things, saith, Surely I come quickly, Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

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DISCOURSE VII.

THE WORD INCARNATE.

JOHN. i. 14.

The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth.

IN contemplating the character of man's Redeemer, it is hard to say, whether our admiration be most excited by the natural dignity, or the voluntary abasement of his person. To form suitable ideas of either, it is expedient to take a view of both. And they appear to the utmost advantage in the exordium of St John's Gospel, where he setteth himself to publish first, the Divinity, and then the incarnation of his most adorable and beloved Master. He mentions in due order, and regular gradation, the glory which the WORD had with the Father, before man, or the world which he now inhabits, had a being; "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"—His glory, with respect to the creatures, the works of his hands; "All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made"—His glory, as the sole author of life and immortality; "In him was life, and the life was the light of men"—His glory, with respect to man in general, as fallen into a state of ignorance and sensuality; "And the light shined
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in darknes, and the darknes comprehended it not"—His glory, with respect to the Jews, to whom he first manifested himself; "He came unto his own, and his own received him not"—His glory, with respect to Christians; "To as many as believed on him gave he power to become the sons of God;" in order to effect which he himself became the son of man; "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

Can any thing be more truly noble and sublime than the former part of the Evangelist's discourse, more pleasing and acceptable than the latter, descending from the loftiest of speculations on the Divine Nature of the Word, to display the benefits of his advent in the flesh; like the Nile, when, rolling from the heights of the Nubian mountains, it diffuseth riches and plenteousness over all the land of Egypt?

The union of two natures in the person of our Lord, which may justly be considered as the source of every blessing we enjoy in time, or hope to enjoy in eternity, is expressed by St John in these terms, "The Word was made flesh,"* each of which will be found worthy our attention.

The term *Word* (*λογος*) was in use among the ancient philosophers, who sometimes speak of a person under that appellation, as the maker of the universe. So Tertullian informs the Gentiles.† And Eusebius, in the xi. book of his Evangelical Preparation, cites a Passage from Amelius, a celebrated

* *λογος σαρξ ἐγένετο.*

† "Apud vestros quoque sapientes *λογον*, id est Sermonem atque Rationem, constat artificem videri universitatis. Hunc enim Zeno determinat facilitorem, qui cuncta in dispositione formaverit."

brated admirer and imitator of Plato, in which he speaks of the *λογος* as being eternal and the maker of all things. This, he says, was the opinion of Heraclitus; and then introduces the beginning of the Gospel of St John; concerning whom, it seems, he was wont to complain, that he had transferred into his book the sentiments of his master Plato.

But it is not likely that our Evangelist either borrowed from, or intended to copy after Plato. And since not only Plato, but Pythagoras and Zeno likewise, conversed with the Jews, it is not at all wonderful that we meet with something about a *ΘΕΙΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ*, or DIVINE WORD, in their writings. Nor, after all, might the philosopher and the apostle use the same term in the same acceptation.

It is customary with the writers of the New Testament to express themselves, as much as may be, in the language of the Old, to which, therefore, we must have recourse for an explanation of their meaning, as the penmen of both, under the direction of one Spirit, used their terms in the same sense.

Now, upon looking into the Old Testament, we find, that "the Word of Jehovah,"* is frequently and evidently the style of a *person*, who is said "to come, to be revealed, or manifested," and the like. As in the xv. chapter of Genesis; "After these things, the Word of Jehovah came unto Abraham in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abraham; I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward. And Abraham said, Lord God, what wilt thou give me, &c."—"Behold the Word of the Lord came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir—and HE brought him forth abroad, &c." Thus again, 1 Sam. iii. "Jehovah revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the Word of Jehovah." The same person is, at

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other times, characterized by the title, "the Name of Jehovah,"* as in Isaiah xxx. 27. "Behold the Name of Jehovah cometh from far, burning with his anger, &c."

With regard to the nature of the person thus denominated, whoever shall duly consider the attributes, powers, and actions ascribed to him, will see reason to think of him not as of a created intelligence, but a person of the divine essence, possessed of all its incommunicable properties. And it may be noticed, that the Targums, or Chaldee Paraphrases, continually substitute *the Word of Jehovah*,† for *Jehovah*‡, ascribing divine characters to the person so named. And the ancient grecizing Jews speak in the same style. Thus in that excellent apocryphal book of Wisdom, ix. 1. "O God who hast made all things *αφορ* by thy Word:" and again, in the passage, which so wonderfully describes the horrors of that night, never to be forgotten by an Israelite, wherein the first born of the Egyptians were slain—"While all things were in quiet silence, and that night was in the midst of her swift course, thine Almighty Word (*αφορ*) leaped down from heaven, out of thy royal throne, as a fierce man of war into the midst of a land of destruction; and brought thine unfeigned commandment, as a sharp sword; and standing up, fitted all things with death; and it touched the heaven, but it stood upon the earth." Ch. xviii. 14.

But whatever may be thought of these passages, certain it is, that when St John comes to treat of this Word, although, to shew a distinction of personality, he first tells us, "The Word was with God;" yet to prevent all mistakes on the other side of the question, he instantly adds, "And the Word

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was God;" thus evidently asserting an unity of essence.

And let any impartial man only lay together, upon this subject, and duly weigh the following particulars; that St John tells us, "The Word was God," and "The Word was made flesh;" that St Paul says, "God was manifest in the flesh; God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself; and in him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;" that our Saviour is stiled JEHOVAH, a name appropriated to the Deity; that he says of himself, "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last *—I am he that searcheth the hearts and reins;" that he created the world by his power, redeemed it by his mercy, governs it by his providence, and shall judge it in righteousness; let any impartial man, I say, consider these things with the attention they deserve, and determine for himself, concerning the nature and dignity of him, who was incarnate for our salvation.

Should it be asked, why this person is stiled the WORD? the proper answer seems to be, that as a thought, or conception of the understanding, is brought forth and communicated in *speech*, or *discourse*, so is the divine will made known by the WORD, who is the offspring and emanation of the eternal mind; an emanation pure and undivided,

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* Upon this passage, which is found Rev. i. 11. Dr DODDRIDGE has the following Note—"That these titles (which occur just above in ver. 8.) should be repeated so soon in a connection which demonstrates they are given to Christ, will appear very remarkable, whatever sense be given to the eighth verse. The argument drawn in the preceding note upon it, would have been strong, wherever such a passage as this had been found; but its immediate connection with this, greatly strengthens it. And I cannot forbear recording it, that this text has done more than any other in the Bible, towards preventing me from giving into that scheme, which would make our Lord Jesus Christ no more than a deified creature."

like that of light, which is the proper issue of the sun, and yet coeval with its parent orb; since the sun cannot be supposed, by the most exact and philosophical imagination, to exist a moment, without emitting light; and were the one eternal, the other, though strictly and properly produced by it, would be as strictly and properly coeternal with it. So true is the assertion of the Nicene fathers; so apt the instance subjoined for its illustration; "God of God, light of light:" in apostolical language, "The brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person."* And whether we consider our Lord under the idea of the WORD, or that of LIGHT, it will lead us to the same conclusion, respecting his office. For as no man can discover the mind of another, but by the word which proceedeth from him; as no man can see the sun, but by the light which itself emitteth; even so, "No man knoweth the Father, save the Son, and him to whomsoever the Son will reveal him."†

This glorious WORD, this uncreated LIGHT, was united to our nature in the person of Christ; "The Word was made *flesh*." *Flesh*, which is a part of our nature, stands here for the whole; and being the baser part of the composition, seems purposely mentioned, to intimate, that the care and love of heaven extend even to that; that our bodies, no less than our spirits, are included in the scheme of redemption; so that while the soul reposeth, in humble confidence, on the mercies of Jesus, the *flesh* also may "rest in hope." In flesh, and by the instigation of flesh, the offence was committed. By taking flesh upon him, therefore, the great Physician, the sovereign healer of all our
maladies,

* *Απαύλατος ὁ θεός, καὶ ὁμοιωτης τῆς ὑποστάσεως.*

† Math. xi. 2.

maladies, corrected the bad qualities of the fountain, that the streams might flow pure and salutary. In flesh the offence was committed, and therefore in flesh satisfaction must be made for it. Our High-Priest was incarnate, that he might have something to offer, more valuable and efficacious than the flesh of bulls and calves. "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure; then said I, Lo I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God."* The nature that sinned, according to the rules of justice, was to suffer for sin; and the Word was made flesh for the same reason, that, when so made, he was baptized by John, "To fulfil all righteousness." "And as Christ took manhood, that by it he might be capable of death, wherunto he humbled himself; so, because manhood is the proper subject of compassion and feeling pity, which maketh the sceptre of Christ's regency, even in the kingdom of heaven, to be amiable; he who, without our nature, could not on earth suffer for the sins of the world, doth now also, by means thereof, both make intercession to God for sinners, and exercise dominion over all men, with a true, a natural, and a sensible touch of pity."†

As the Divinity is an object by no means within the grasp of the human understanding, it were absurd to expect an adequate idea of the mode of its union with flesh, expressed in the text by the word "made," "The Word was *made* flesh."‡ It sufficeth, in this case, to maintain the general truth of the proposition against those, who, in different

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ways,

* Ps. xl. 6. Heb. x. 5. † HOOKER, Ecclesiast. Polity, v. 51.

‡ BARNES.

ways, by subtilty and sophistry, have laboured to oppugn and destroy it. We must not, with Arius, deny the Saviour to be truly God, because he became man; nor assert, with Appollinaris, that he was not really man, because he was also God. We must not, with Nestorius, rend Christ asunder, and divide him into two persons; nor, after the example of Eutyches, confound in his person those natures which should be distinguished. These were the four capital errors, which, in the earlier ages, harraised and distracted the Christian church, on the point of the incarnation; and in opposition to which, the four most famous ancient general councils of Nice, Constantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedon, were called. Whatever was by them decreed, either in declaration of Christian belief, or refutation of heresy, may all be comprised, as judicious Hooker well noteth, in four words, "truly, perfectly, indivisibly, distinctly;"* truly God, perfectly man, indivisibly one person, distinctly two natures. "Within the compass of which four heads, saith he, I may truly affirm, that all heresies, which touch the person of Jesus Christ, (whether they have risen in these latter days, or in any age heretofore) may be with great facility brought to confine themselves."†

The apostle to the Hebrews, writing on the subject of the incarnation, thus expresseth himself, "He taketh not hold of angels, but he taketh hold of the seed of Abraham;"‡ he took, or assumed the manhood into God. As the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ. The soul is not turned into, nor com-

pounded

* *Ἀλλ' ὡς ἐν, τέλει, ἀδιαιρέτως, ἀσυνμίχτως.*

† Book v. Sect. 54.

‡ *Ὁς γὰρ διὰ τὸν ἀγγέλων ἐνδύναται, ἀλλὰ σπέρματος Ἀβραάμ ἐνδύναται.*

pounded with the body; yet they two, though distinct in nature, form one man. The natures are preserved, without confusion; the person is entire, without division.*

Thus, then, as the necessity of the case, and the counsels of the most High required, "The Word was made flesh;" and being made flesh, "dwelt amongst us;" not appearing occasionally, as in ancient times, but making his abode with his creatures; "rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, and delighting to be with the sons of men;" inasmuch, that we read of those, who were not afraid to ask him, "Master, where dwellest thou?" and received this gracious answer, "Come and see." "He pitched his tent among us," † a stranger and a sojourner, as his fathers were, concerning whom it is the apostle's observation, that, though the heirs of the promise, they lived in tents, shifting from place to place, and declaring, that here, on earth, they had no permanent city, but looked for one to come. The fleshly tabernacle, in which he resided, at the close of his pilgrimage, was to be taken down, in order afterwards to be re-erected in a more glorious manner, and for ever fixed at the right hand of God; like the *GIORG* of old, which first travelled with Israel through the wilderness in a moveable tent, and then, at length, rested in a durable temple, on the hill of Sion. As the Captain of our salvation, the Leader of the Israel of God, he preceded his people to the battle against their spiritual enemies; and now, as King of Glory, crowned with victory and honour, he is seated on his throne

* Sic factum est Caro, ut maneret Verbum; non immutando quod erat, sed assumendo quod non erat: nostra auxit, sua non minuit; nec sacramentum pietatis detrimentum Deitatis.

CONCIL. CHALCED.

† *Εκεῖ σκηνώσας ἡμεῖς.*

throne, holding forth rewards to all his faithful foldiers and servants, which they are to receive at his hands, when the days of their pilgrimage and warfare shall be ended.

But let us not imagine, that, even in the state of humiliation, his glory was altogether obscured by the veil, within which it dwelt; or that its frequent irradiations were not sufficient to convince those who beheld the house, how illustrious a guest it had the honour to contain. Eye-witnesses have given a different account. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father." The sun was covered with a cloud; but it was the sun still; and often manifested, through the cloud, the power and brightness of its beams.

That Christ was man, the labours and the sorrows, the stripes, the wounds, the pains, and the death, which, as man, he suffered, did fully attest. But they who saw the most boisterous elements in nature cease from raging, and compose themselves into a perfect calm, when he said, "Peace, be still;" they who saw a foul and inveterate leprosy done away in a moment, by the words, "Be clean;" they who saw a body, that had been four days, dead, arise from its tomb, when he called, "Lazarus, come forth;" these might well ask, "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea," disease, and death itself, "obey him?" Outwardly indeed he appears to be a man; but surely, under that form, a celestial visitant is come among us. Is not this the Lord of nature? Is not this man's Almighty Redeemer?

When, at the marriage in Cana, he had caused water to change its nature and properties, and to become wine, it is said, "This beginning of mira-
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cles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and *manifested forth his glory*; and his disciples believed on him."

But our Evangelist saw more. He was one of those who attended their Master on the mount of transfiguration, and to whom was vouchsafed a glimpse of that excellent glory, which the WORD "had with the Father before the world was," and with which the humanity, by him assumed, is now for ever invested. The Divinity, enshrined within, communicated its radiance outwardly to the body, and even to the garments, till mortality seemed to be swallowed up of life; "His face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light." The "Lord our God became exceeding glorious, he was clothed with majesty and honour, he decked himself with light as it were with a garment."

And if we reflect upon the manner in which it pleased the Father to exalt and ennoble the most abasing circumstances of his life and death, by the choir of angels that descended to celebrate his birth; the new star which appeared in the skies, guiding the eastern sages to Bethlehem; the voice which answered him from heaven, in the audience of the Jews; the preternatural eclipse of the sun at his crucifixion; recollecting at the same time, the triumph of his resurrection and the manner of his ascension in the presence of his disciples; all these particulars conspire to declare the glory not of a servant, as Moses, but of a Son, of "the only begotten;" a glory not of magnificence only, or one beset with terrors, like that at Sinai, but bearing towards man, in every instance, a benign and most friendly aspect; as the same bright luminary, which rises in glorious majesty upon the earth, gives life, health, and gladness to all its inhabitants.

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"We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

In a subsequent verse of this chapter, we find "grace and truth," set in opposition to the Mosaic law. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." The law was the dispensation of justice, austere, rigorous, inflexible. "He that doeth these things, shall live in them;" and, "Cursed is he that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them." The Gospel is the dispensation of mercy, mild, gracious, forgiving, saying to the unhappy transgressor of the law, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved." The law could only make sin known, and, by consequence, aggravate its guilt; the Gospel can pardon sin, and abolish its guilt. Such is the contrast between the moral law and "grace." The ceremonial stands opposed to "truth," not as being *false*, but *figurative*. "The law had a shadow of good things to come; but the body," the substance, the reality, the truth, pointed at, and delineated by such a shadowy representation, "is of Christ." The blood of bulls and goats, for instance, was offered, but it could not take away sin; it was never intended so to do; it was "a figure for the time then present," designed to direct the faith of the offerer to its correspondent truth, namely, the blood of Messiah, to be afterward shed for that purpose. In itself, the law was ineffectual, and, of course, if rested in, proved fallacious and destructive.

But the words, as they stand in the text, may be taken in a more extended sense, comprehending the whole world, which, at the time of Christ's advent, was in a state of *error*, and *condemnation*. The two blessings, therefore, of which it stood

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most eminently in need, were, "grace and truth;" grace to deliver it from condemnation, and truth to correct its errors. Both these God by Christ did vouchsafe to bestow upon it. "He hath made us accepted* in the Beloved," remitting our sins, and receiving us to favour. He hath also shewn us the true and the right way, enabling as well as directing us to walk therein. Grace, without truth, can only mock us; truth, without grace, can only fright us. But when grace hath brought us to him, truth will keep us with him: and through grace we shall accomplish what truth requireth at our hands. "Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him, that glory may dwell in our land. Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other."†

With wonder, gratitude, and joy, therefore, let us reflect upon the honour done us by the WORD being MADE FLESH. Our nature is exalted to the throne of God; there is a MAN in heaven! The disciples beheld Christ's glory in the days of his humiliation; but eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man to conceive the glory with which God hath now invested "that body which it hath pleased him to make his own; that body wherewith he hath saved the world; that body which hath been and is the root of eternal life, the instrument wherewith Deity worketh, the sacrifice which taketh away sin, the price which hath ransomed souls from death, the leader of the whole army of bodies that shall rise again. For though it had a beginning from us, yet God hath given it vital efficacy, heaven hath endowed it with celestial power, that virtue which it

* *Εξαγορασεν ημας.* Ephes. I. 6.

† Ps. lxxxv. 9, 10.

it hath from above, in regard whereof, all the angels in heaven adore it."*

And if "no man ever yet hated his own flesh," can God hate the flesh, which, by being taken into one person with the WORD, is united to the Godhead? Can the Father hate Him, of whom he more than once declared from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased?" "And we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. It is a great mystery," saith the apostle, "but I speak concerning Christ and the church."†

When man had offended, he fled from his Maker, and dared no more to approach the divine presence. But now that the WORD incarnate hath published his general invitation—"O thou that hearest the prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come!"

If the Son of God became the Son of man, why should it seem a thing incredible, that the sons of men should become the sons of God? "Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know, that when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory; for we shall see him as he is."‡

Delight we, then, to talk (and, since the incarnation of the WORD, why should we not delight to talk) of the dignity of human nature? Let us be careful to act up to it. To a Christian the advice of the philosopher comes with redoubled force; "Reverence yourself."—Consider, to whom you are related, by whom you have been begotten again to a lively hope of an unfading inheritance, The stock, from which you are sprung, is noble,
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* HOOKER, Book v. Sect. 34.

† Ephes. v. 30.

‡ 1 John ii. 2.

it is royal, it is divine. Disgrace it not by base and unworthy actions. Your inheritance is with the saints in light; have no fellowship with the works of darkness. Let your education be suitable to your birth, your conduct answerable to your expectations.* The infirmities and dishonours, to which mortality is, and must be subject, need not discompose and afflict you. Be not dismayed at the approach of pain and sickness; let not the coffin and the shroud terrify you. For though "all flesh be as grass, and all the goodliness of man as the flower of grass;" though "the grass withereth, the flower fadeth," kindly admonishing you to prepare for an autumn and a winter, when the spring of youth and the summer of manhood shall be passed and gone; yet "the WORD of God abideth for ever." And this is the WORD, which hath been "made flesh, and dwelt among us;" this is the WORD, to which your nature is in Christ united; "this is the WORD, which by the Gospel is preached unto you;" whose glory there displayed, "as the glory of the only begotten of the Father," you may now behold; and who, by his "grace" preceding, and his "truth" accompanying, will lead you to glory, the excellence of which, enjoyment only can enable you to comprehend.

* *Utile esse civitatibus, dicit Varro, ut se viri fortes, etiam si falsum sit, Diis genitos esse credant, ut eo modo humanus animus velut divinæ stirpis fiduciam gerens, res magnas aggrediendas præsumat audacius, et agat vehementius. Augustin. de Civit. Dei. lib. iii. p. 49. See Leland, Advant. and Necess. of Rev. i. 182.*

DISCOURSE VIII.

THE CASE OF THE JEWS.

JOHN i. 11.

His own received him not.

THAT the eternal Son of God should condescend, in human form, to visit his people, as their Saviour and Redeemer, is an event, which may well be allowed to excite our admiration. But how does our astonishment rise, when we are informed, that his people refused to receive so gracious a visitant?

The unbeliever, who is continually prying into every corner of ancient and modern history, for arguments to countenance him in his unbelief, seizes, we may be sure, with avidity, on this prominent and marvellous circumstance, and labours to make his advantage of it; affecting to conclude, that the incredulity of the Jew can only be accounted for, by supposing a deficiency in the evidence laid before him. And the believer, though satisfied that the mission of Jesus stands incontestibly proved, will yet often find himself perplexed, when he reflecteth, how strange an occurrence it is, that a people, selected from all others to be the *peculium* of the Most High; by his mighty hand and stretched out arm rescued from bondage; conducted through all kinds of difficulties and dangers; at length settled in a country destined for their habitation; and there constituted the depositaries and guardi-

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ans of the divine oracles and institutions; that this people should reject and crucify the person all along foretold, as we say, by those oracles, and pointed out by those institutions.

The truth is, that in all the annals of mankind, and in the whole compass of speculation, we meet not with a subject of so very singular and extraordinary a nature, as that now before us, namely, the case of the Jews. It may be added, that there is none, on every account, more deserving the deep and attentive consideration of Christians. Let us, therefore, enquire into the cause of the phenomenon, with which they present us. Let us hear their plea, and examine the grounds and reasons, on which it is founded.

They did not, because they could not, deny that the Son of Mary wrought miracles; miracles, though differing in kind, yet equal, in number and magnitude, to those performed by their own great lawgiver. Why, then, believing Moses, did they not believe him? What was it, that could occasion their infidelity? That which occasions it at all times, and in all places, when proper evidence is offered, and rejected—The adoption of certain prejudices and prepossessions, as first principles, in opposition to which no evidence is to be admitted. Four points were by them taken for granted, from which flowed all their reasonings, and all their proceedings.

The points were these:

First, That, as the chosen seed of Abraham, they had an exclusive indefeasible right to the favours of heaven.

Secondly, That the law of Moses, on account of its own intrinsic efficacy, and without a

view to any thing farther, was ordained for perpetual observance.

Thirdly, That the possession of their city, temple, and country, in peace, wealth, and prosperity, was the end of the promises.

Fourthly, That the prophecies warranted them in the expectation of a Messiah, who, as a temporal prince, should secure them in such possession, by subduing their civil enemies, and reigning over them, in Judea.

If these things were so, they had much, indeed, to say for themselves. But let us see, whether there be not, in their own Scriptures, evidence sufficient to set these positions aside, and to condemn those men, who, upon the strength of them, rejected and crucified Jesus of Nazareth.

Their *first* position was, that, as the chosen seed of Abraham, they had an exclusive and indefeasible right to the favours of heaven.

For thus, in reading the gospel history, we find them continually priding themselves in their descent from Abraham; as if, in order to their acceptance with God, nothing were required, but a proof of their relation to that patriarch; and as if, while that relation subsisted, no misconduct of their own could occasion them, as a nation, to forfeit such acceptance. When our Lord spake to them concerning that liberty wherewith he came to make them free, they, mistaking spiritual for civil liberty, confidently and roundly replied, "We are Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man;"* unaccountably forgetting, as it should seem, what they had formerly suffered in Egypt and Babylon, and the state in which they lived, at that very time, under the Roman power. The mention of hea-

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* John viii. 33.

ven's mercy being extended to the Gentiles, always put them beside themselves. Christ only hinted the case of Elijah healing Naaman the Syrian, and that of Elisha being sent to a widow of *Sarepta*,* leaving the application to themselves. They understood him, and endeavoured instantly to destroy him. St Paul, relating the story of his conversion, was patiently heard, till he touched upon the circumstance of his mission to the Gentiles. "They gave him audience to this word, and then lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth, for it is not fit that he should live!"†

Now this notion was taken up, in direct opposition to their own Scriptures.

For they neglected to observe, what it was very obvious for any one to observe, who read the Scriptures, that Abraham himself was not chosen and blessed, merely as Abraham the son of Terah; but as a servant of God, tried in various ways, and, in all, found faithful and obedient. They should, therefore, have reflected, that his descendents, of course, stood on the same foot, and would not be accounted the children of Abraham, when they ceased to do the works of Abraham.‡

The same lesson might have been learned from that part of the sacred history, which records the rejection of Ishmael the eldest son of Abraham; and afterward, of Esau the first born of Isaac. These transactions evinced, that no dependence could be placed on the incident of being the seed of Abraham; since, of that seed, for certain reasons, some have been rejected, while others were accepted. So it had been formerly; and therefore, in parallel circumstances, so it might be again.

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Remarkable,

* Luke iv. 26. † Acts xxii. 22. ‡ See John viii. 39.

Remarkable, to this purpose, was the case of their ancestors, who came out of Egypt. A promise was made, that they should enter into Canaan. But the promise was afterwards revoked, because it was conditional. They fell in the wilderness, and others succeeded to the inheritance. And why did they not enter into rest? For the same reason which keeps the Jews out, at this hour; because of their unbelief, and hardness of heart.

The light of God's countenance was frequently withdrawn from the Israelites, when they sinned, and again restored, upon their repentance. Other qualifications were therefore requisite, without which, it little availed them to be of the house and lineage of Abraham.

It should have been recollected by the Jews, that the grand and capital promise made to Abraham was not limited to his natural posterity, but, on the contrary, in the most express terms that language could afford, extended to all others. It was the promise of the Seed, that is, the Messiah, in whom, not Israel only according to the flesh, but "ALL THE NATIONS OF THE EARTH should be blessed." * And for this reason, the promise was made, previous to the covenant of circumcision, under which the Jews claimed. In the state of uncircumcision "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness;" plainly becoming thereby the father of them who should afterward believe like him, though not circumcised; that is to say, the father of the Gentiles, or "nations of the earth," one day to be blessed," in the promised Seed, or Messiah.

The Jews trusted in Moses. Wherefore, then, did they not hear Moses, and attend to what he had

* Gen. xii. 3.

had to say to them? In the plainest words he had told them, 1500 years before, what at length appeared to St. Peter, who, for some time, had the prejudices of a Jew about him; that "God did not respect persons;"* He had told them, that if they rebelled against their God, they should be "punished, as *strangers* were punished; and as the *nations*, so should they perish."† Nay, he had clearly predicted, that the days would come, when upon their refection for their abominable iniquities, the Gentiles should be taken in their room, to "provoke them to jealousy."‡ Before the time of Moses, their progenitor Jacob had declared, that whenever Shiloh should come, "the nations would be gathered to him."§ How very bold and explicit Isaiah continually is upon this topic of light, life, and salvation to be manifested, through Messiah, to the Gentiles, is well known. Malachi was the last of their prophets. He lived within 400 years of the appearance of Jesus. What a prophecy did he leave upon the subject, penned, as it were, with a sun beam—"I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand: for from the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the *Gentiles*, and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the *Heathen*, saith the Lord of hosts."§

Such are the documents and the warnings, contained in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, against the first tenet of the Jews, that, as the chosen seed of Abraham, they had an exclusive and indefeasible right

* Deut. x. 17. See Acts x. 34.

† Deut. vii. 19; 20.

‡ Deut. xxxii. 20, 21.

§ Gen. xlix. 10.

§ Mal. i. 10, 11.

right to the favours of heaven. Yet, with these Scriptures in their hands, in their heads, in their mouths, and upon their phylacteries, boasting and glorying upon every occasion, in an exact and accurate knowledge of them, did those men, after having crucified Jesus, persecute his apostles unto the death, from city to city, because the Gentiles were invited to share the benefits and blessings of the Gospel.—Such is the force of prejudice! Such the illusion of self-love!

Proceed we to consider their *second* position, namely, that the law of Moses, on account of its own intrinsic efficacy, and without a view to any thing farther, was ordained for perpetual observance.

It was by no means safe, before an audience of Jews, to hint, though ever so remotely, at the inefficacy of the Mosaic rites considered in themselves to procure the divine favour; or to insinuate, though ever so covertly, the termination and abolition of that system. Some of the “blasphemous words,” charged upon the protomartyr St Stephen, and for which he was stoned, were these; “that Jesus of Nazareth should change the customs, or rites, which Moses delivered.”* In their ears, this was the worst of blasphemies. It does not appear, that Stephen had used such an expression; it is probable, at that season, he was more guarded; and, they, who deposed their testimony against him, are styled, “false witnesses.” By urging some prophecy, or parallel, from the Old Testament, as he afterwards urged several in his apology, it is likely he had intimated as much; and the words themselves, with which he stands charged, contain nothing more than the truth, sufficiently attested by the

* Acts vi. 13, 14.

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the law itself; which all along carried in it the most plenary and abundant evidence of its own present inefficacy, and future dissolution; as they, who prided themselves in the study and interpretation of it, ought to have known.

For, upon the first view of the law—Let us, for a moment, suppose, with the Jew, that the legal ceremonies, in themselves, without having respect to any thing above and beyond them, were indeed effective of the purposes, for which they were said to be designed.—To what strange conclusions shall we be led? We must conclude, that the death of a beast could render the Deity propitious to the offerer; that a goat could carry the transgressions of a congregation into the wilderness; that the blood of bulls could atone for sin; that water, with the ashes of a red heifer infused in it, could purge away the pollutions of the mind; and the like. But against such conclusions common sense exclaims aloud, and forces us to draw another, and the only just and proper inference, namely, that such rites derived their virtue not from themselves, but from persons and actions represented by them; that they were a figure for the time being; a shadow exhibiting to the faith of the pious and intelligent votary the shape and lineaments of a substance, which did not appear. This must ever be the case of external ceremonies in religion; and we ourselves should be in a situation similar to that of the Jew, if blindly and ignorantly adhering to the letter of our own sacraments, exclusive of the things they signify, and the dispositions they require, we should suppose a power inherent in the baptismal water, to wash away guilt, and in the eucharistic elements, to confer pardon and peace.

Again.

Again. Be pleased to observe the opposite character given, at different times, of the same rites. One while it is said, that they were highly acceptable to God; that he was delighted with the favour of the sacrifices, and well pleased, as it is natural to suppose he should be, with the observance of his own institutions. At other times, we hear him declaring, with indignation, that his soul was weary with offerings, and hated the appointed feasts; that he could not away with the new moons and sabbaths; that incense was an abomination to him; and, in a word, that he would not eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats. Now, if we take the law and its rites to have been the things really and ultimately designed, as in themselves excellent and efficacious, they would have been always pleasing to God, like duties intrinsically good and virtuous, of which we never hear the Almighty speaking, as he doth of these sacrifices and oblations. But if the legal rites were figurative; if they were symbolical of internal dispositions and actions; then would they necessarily become pleasing and displeasing to God, in different respects: pleasing, when accompanied by such internal dispositions and actions; when disjoined from them, and rested in as meritorious, to the last degree displeasing, hateful, and abominable. They are said to have been both the one and the other; and therefore, were most indubitably figurative. To any considering person the thing speaks itself.

But the Scriptures of the Old Testament did not leave a truth of such importance to be inferred. They have expressly declared it.

To instance in that rite, which was the discriminating and characteristic mark of the seed of Abraham, circumcision. Moses himself hath affirmed that a

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spiritual or mental circumcision was intended; and that the end of that commandment was the love of God, out of a pure heart, and faith unfeigned. "Circumcise (says he) the foreskin of your hearts and be no more stiff-necked."* And again, "The Lord thy God shall circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live."† When a Jew, reading this, still continues to think, that the legal rites were instituted for their own sake, and that their value lies in the *opus operatum*, is the veil on Moses' face, or on his heart? For hath not Moses told *him*, in terms as plain as those in which St Paul hath told *us*, that He is not a Jew, who is one outwardly, nor is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew, who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."‡

Thus with regard to the many ablutions enjoined and practised under the law—"Wash ye, make ye clean," saith God to his people, by the prophet Isaiah. So far, the terms are legal, and may be deemed ambiguous: but by what immediately follows, their meaning is explained and fixed; "Put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well."|| As if he had said, what avails the outward and visible sign, without the thing signified by it? When we read in the li. Psalm, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow;" § we may think we hear the voice of a Jew. But let us hear him again—"Wash me thoroughly from mine

* Deut. x. 16. † Deut. xxx. 6. ‡ Rom. ii. ult.

|| Isai. i. 16, 17.

§ Isai. li. 7.

mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit.”* What can a Christian—What can the devoutest and best informed Christian in the like unhappy circumstances, say more, than thus to pray, that God would by his mercy pardon the guilt, and efface the stain of sin, and renew the heart and soul again to righteousness, by the grace and power of his Holy Spirit? And whoever peruses with attention the writings of the prophets, will find, that it is always one part of their employment, to recall the Israelites from the dead letter to the living spirit of their law; to press upon them the necessity of suing for the divine favour by that true repentance, and that stedfast faith in God’s promises, in the exercise of which it was the design of their ritual to train them. The office of a Christian minister, *mutatis mutandis* is, in this particular, the same; and it may be executed, with the utmost propriety, in the very same language. The noble and affecting exhortation in our Communion office affords a striking proof of this; where the prophetic and the evangelical expressions are finely interwoven, and, like the colours in a good picture, most harmoniously melt into each other.

To speak a word more, touching the *perpetuity* of the law of Moses. The Jew argues for it, from the immutability of God. But it is no more a reflection upon the divine immutability, that the law, having answered its end, should be abolished, than

* Ps. li. 2, 9, et seq.

it is, that the world should be destroyed, after the accomplishment of the design, for which it was created. He, who gave the law, foretold, in the clearest terms, by his prophets, that, at a certain period, it should cease; that he would make a new covenant by the Messiah, and that the old covenant should be disannulled;* that the old things should pass away, and be forgotten;† that the ark of the covenant should come no more to mind;‡ that the legal sacrifices should cease, and sacrifices of a purer kind be established in their room; § that the Aaronical order of priesthood should be dissolved, and the order of Melchisedeck be introduced by the Messiah; and that this latter priesthood should be an ordinance for ever. §

From these considerations it appears, that the law, in its nature, was figurative and transitory, being a dispensation interposed between the promise and its accomplishment. Previous to the law, the Gospel was preached to Abraham, that in his seed, the Messiah, all nations should be blessed. The same Gospel, at the beginning, had been preached to Adam, that the seed of the woman, or the Messiah, should bruise the head, that is, destroy the power of the old serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, who deceived our first parents, and deceiveth the whole world. But as there was to be a long interval between the promise and its performance, in the mean time, till the seed should come, to whom the promise was made, the law took men under its tuition, prescribed to them their duty, shewed them their guilt and their pollution, and pointed out the means of pardon and sanctification. When the promise was fulfilled, and the seed came, it had executed its office, and ceased of course,

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* Jer xxxi. 31. † Mai. xliii. 18, 19. ‡ Jer iii. 16.
§ M. l. i. 10. § Ps. cx. 4. See PASCHAL'S Thoughts, P. 187.

giving place to him, whom it had hitherto prefigured and predicted. It spoke by the mouth of the aged and dying Simeon, when, upon embracing the child Jesus in the temple, he exclaimed, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of thy people Israel."

The *third* point, taken for granted by the Jews in our Saviour's time, was, that the possession of their city, temple and country, in peace, wealth, and prosperity, was the end of the promises.

But their own Scriptures militate, with equal force, against this notion likewise.

For here, we must recollect again, that *the* promise, emphatically so styled, was made, in Abraham, to "all the nations of the earth," who could not possibly have any concern in the blessing of Canaan.

We must observe, that, if Canaan were indeed the end of the promise, the fathers of the Jewish people, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, never were, nor could hope to be partakers of it. They sojourned in the land of Promise, as in a strange land. God gave them none inheritance in it, not so much as to set their foot on. They confessed themselves to be strangers and pilgrims, travelling towards a country, in which they might fix their abode. Such they lived, and such they died. The country, therefore, which they sought, was one beyond the grave.

When the children of Abraham were settled in Canaan, true Israelites understood, that the rest they there enjoyed was by no means the real, permanent, final rest, promised and intended. In the xcv. Psalm, David, though king of Israel, and seated

ed on the hill of Sion, still speaks of another future rest, warning the people of his time, that they fell not short of it, as their ancestors, who came out of Egypt, fell short of Canaan, through unbelief and disobedience. If Joshua had given them the true final rest, David so long afterward could not have spoken of another day of trial, and another rest reserved in store for the faithful. For this reason it is, that the same David, in that sublime and devout act of praise and thanksgiving uttered just before his death, recognizing the mercies of God to Israel in the land of Promise, yet makes the very confession which the ancient patriarchs had made, when they had none inheritance in that land. "We are strangers before thee, our God, and sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding." *

If, therefore, the land of Canaan were not the true and final seat of rest, peace and felicity for the people of God, we must conclude concerning that, as we did above concerning the law, that it terminated not in itself, nor was given for its own sake, but was also, in its kind, a figure, for the time then present, of a glorious and permanent possession in a better world, where all those, who live and die in the Lord, shall indeed rest from their labours. The Jews had sufficient grounds, from their own Scriptures, to consider it as such. They should have considered it as such; and they should have carried on their thoughts to the rest and the inheritance of the saints in light, whither their fathers were gone *before* them through faith in the promised seed, the Messiah, whose office it was, like another Joshua, by vanquishing the adverse powers, to open the kingdom of heaven, that true land of Promise to all believers.

* 1 Chron. xxix. 15.

The *fourth* position maintained by the Jews was, that the prophecies warranted them in the expectation of a Messiah, who, as a temporal prince, should secure them in their possessions, by subduing their civil enemies, and reigning over them in Judea.

The same prejudice which operated with regard to the family of Abraham, the law of Moses, and the land of Promise, operated likewise with regard to the Messiah. This was but a natural and necessary consequence. For if they had fixed their thoughts on their national privileges, their ceremonies, and the inheritance of Canaan, the Messiah by them desired must needs be one, who would defend and preserve them in the enjoyment of those privileges, those ceremonies, and that inheritance. Accordingly, the notion current among the Jews, when our Lord was upon earth, and which, we find, stuck fast to his disciples even after his resurrection, was, that Messiah, when he came, should "restore again the kingdom to Israel." * And the grand argument insisted on in the Talmud, and by the Rabbins, is, that he did not subdue the nations by the force and terror of his arms. He overcame not the Gentiles, say they, with martial power; he loaded us not with their spoils; he neither enlarged our dominion, nor increased our power. †

Now the Scriptures do undoubtedly describe Messiah, as one, who should deliver his people from their enemies, and reign over them in glorious majesty. The Jews construed those passages of a temporal deliverance from the Roman yoke, and a temporal reign in Palestine. But did they construe them aright? Do not the same Scriptures unfold the design of his coming, and the process of the redemption by him, in the fullest and most particular

* Acts i. 6.

† See PASCUAL. P. 190.

particular manner? Surely they do. How many passages are there, always allowed by the ancient, and not now denied, by the modern Jews, to belong to Messiah, which describe him as poor, lowly, despised, afflicted, oppressed, dying, dead? Would you now compose a man's character, without accounting for the contrarieties in it? Can you be said to have composed that of the Messiah, while you leave out one half of it? Are you not bound to find a person, in whom all the seemingly contradictory particulars are reconciled? They are easily, they are completely reconciled in the person of Jesus, as set forth, by us Christians, in his twofold nature, as God and man. They never were, they never will, they never can be reconciled in any other: and the Jews, by their modern fiction of two different Messiahs, to answer the purpose, have at once justified us, and given sentence against themselves.

But that the force of the prophetic testimony in favour of the Messiahship of Jesus may appear at one view, permit me, in a concise and summary way, to recall the several particulars of it to your remembrance; as I find them collected by a very learned and eminent writer.

The prophets speak of a new and second covenant, which God would make with his people: they mention, not once, or twice, but very often, the conversion of the Gentiles from superstition and idolatry, to the worship of the true God: they speak of four successive empires, the last of which was the Roman empire; and under this last empire, they say, that a new and everlasting kingdom should be established, by one, to whom God should give absolute power and dominion. A great person was to come, who should be Immanuel, or God

with us, the Son of God and the Son of man, the seed of Abraham and of David; born of a virgin, poor and obscure, and yet one whom David calls his Lord; the Lord to whom the temple belonged, the mighty God, a great king, an everlasting priest, though not of the tribe of Levi; born at Bethlehem; a prophet like unto Moses, but greater than Moses; a prophet, who shall preach to the poor and meek, and proclaim liberty to the captives, and comfort the mourners, and heal the broken hearted; who should proclaim his Gospel, first and principally, in the land of Zebulon and Naphtali, in Calilee of the Gentiles; who should have a forerunner in the spirit of Elias, crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord; who should instruct in a mild and peaceable manner, without wrath and contention, before the destruction of the temple, in which temple he should be seen and heard; who should enter Jerusalem meek and humble, and riding on an ass; who should work miracles more than Moses and all the prophets, and miracles of the merciful and beneficent kind, open the eyes of the blind, and the ears of the deaf, and make the dumb to praise God, and the lame to leap as an hart; who, notwithstanding all his power and goodness, should be rejected by the greater part of the nation, to whom he should be a stumbling block; who should be despised and afflicted, a man of sorrow, and cut off from the land of the living; who should have enemies numerous, powerful, crafty, and wicked; who should be accused by false witnesses, betrayed by an intimate and particular friend, sold for thirty pieces of silver, and the money given for a potter's field, when it had been flung away by the traitor, who should not live long after his crime, and whose office should be

be filled up by another: that the enemies of this blessed person should use him contumeliously, buffet him, and spit upon him, while he should be led like a lamb to the slaughter, not opening his mouth, but to intercede for the transgressors; that his enemies should strip him of his raiment, divide it among themselves, and cast lots upon it, surround him, pierce his hands and his feet, mock him, and shake their heads at him, give him gall to eat, and vinegar to drink; that he should be reduced to so weak and languishing a condition, that his bones might all be counted, his heart should melt within him, and his tongue cleave to the roof of his mouth; that he should be brought to the dust of death; that he should be pierced, and yet not one of his bones be broken; that he should be laid in the sepulchre of a rich and honourable man, none of his enemies hindering it; that he should rise again, before he had seen corruption, and subdue his enemies, and ascend into heaven, and sit at God's right hand, and be crowned with honour and glory, and see his seed, and prosper, and justify many, and be adored by kings and princes; that then Jerusalem should be made desolate, and the Jews dispersed in all lands, and, the Gentiles should be converted, and flow into the church.*

In the application of a single prophecy, especially if it be a figurative one, interest and ingenuity may raise many doubts and difficulties; but against the accumulated weight of evidence, καὶ ὑπερβολὴν εἰς ὑπερβολὴν afforded by so many plain literal predictions, all pointing to one person, all punctually and exactly fulfilled in Jesus Christ, and in him alone, no tolerably plausible objection can ever be made. Let candour and integrity, reason and common sense be

* Dr JORTIN's Remarks on Eccles. Hist. Vol. I. P. 112.

be judges in the cause, and they must determine—they have already determined by the virtuous Nathanael—"Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the king of Israel."

Such, then, is the case of the Jews, such the evidence they rejected, and such the cause of the rejecting it. Having fixed their eyes and their hopes upon the shadow, they set at naught the substance, though appearing at the time and in the manner described by their own prophets. Having rejected their God, they have been rejected by him; and the fatal errors, which occasioned their infidelity, have received a final and tremendous refutation, by the divine judgments inflicted upon them.

To demonstrate, that, as the seed of Abraham, they had no exclusive and indefeasible right to the favours of heaven, those favours have been withdrawn from them, and conferred on the Gentiles.

To shew, that the law of Moses was not in itself efficacious, or designed to be perpetual, they are put under an absolute incapacity of observing it any more. They have no altar, no priest, no temple.

To reprove the fond notion, that Canaan was the end of the promises, they have been driven out of it, and forbidden to approach it. In a state of utter desolation, it has passed successively into the hands of their enemies of every denomination, and never reverted to them.

To eradicate the ideas of a temporal Messiah, and dominion over the nations, after beholding the sceptre departed from Judah, after having been deceived by a multitude of impostors, they continue to this hour, at the end of 1700 years, fugitives and vagabonds upon the earth.

And

And now let us be permitted, in our turn, to address an argument to the deist, upon this topic. You demand ocular proof of prophecy accomplished. It is before you, in an instance without a parallel. It was repeatedly foretold, both in the Old and New Testament, that, for the rejection and murder of their Messiah, the Jews should be dispersed into all countries; yet that they should not be swallowed up and lost among their conquerors, but should still subsist, to latest times, a distinct people. By Jeremiah, God declared he would make an end of the nations their oppressors, but he would not make an end of them.* You will not say, this prediction was written since the event; and certainly, an occurrence more singular, or improbable, could not have been predicted. In the course of human affairs, who hath heard such a thing; who hath seen such a thing? Yet, so it is. The mighty monarchies of Assyria, Persia, Greece, and Rome, are vanished, like the shadows of the evening, or the phantoms of the night. Their places know them no more. Nothing remains of them, but their names: while this little contemptible people, as you are wont to style the Jews, strangely secure, without a friend or protector, amidst the wreck of empires; oppressed, persecuted, harrassed always, by edicts and executioners, by murders and massacres, hath outlived the very ruins of them all. Except you see signs and wonders, you will not believe. Behold then a sign and a wonder, the accomplishment of prophecy in a standing miracle; the *busb of Moses* surrounded by flames, ever burning, and never consumed! Contemplate the sight, as it deserves; and be not faithless, but believing;

* for

* Jer. xxx. 11.

for this is the Lord's doing, and therefore so marvelous in our eyes.

That the Gospel, when slighted by the Jews, might not be without its fruit, and that God might have a church and people to supply their place, the Apostles turned to the Gentiles; so that *their* fall became the riches of the world, and good was brought out of evil. Let the warning, given us by our own Apostle, be ever sounding in our ears, though when we consider the state of religion among us, it may perhaps make them tingle. "Because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high minded, but fear; for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee."*

The cause of Jewish infidelity was an hatred of the power of godliness, concealed under the cloke of zeal for its form, and occasioned by a love of wealth, power, and parade, a notion of privilege, pre-eminence, and indefectibility. And is it not astonishing, that, with such an example before her eyes, the church of Rome should be pursuing the same course, and splitting upon the same rock? Let us be thankful, that we are come out of her; and let us guard against the shadow of her crime, by constantly bearing in mind, that the promises are spiritual, and that they are conditional; that if the light of the Gospel, which is vouchsafed us, be abused, God can remove it; that, like the bright ruler of the day, it may proceed westward, and leave us in darkness; that he who converted Britons and Saxons, can call the tribes of America to the faith, and "of those stones raise up children unto Abraham."

To

* Rom. xi. 20, 21.

To conclude—When we see the Jews, for so great a length of time, preserved under calamities, which would have been long since the ruin of any other people, our regard and attention ought to be strongly excited towards them. Extraordinary was their beginning, and their progress: more extraordinary, perhaps, will be their end: for if they abide not still in unbelief, they, as the natural branches, *may* surely be grafted in again: and there can be little doubt, but that such an event *will* take place. It is said, they are dispersed, “till the times of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled;”* and that “blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.”† It seems evidently to be implied, that at the period mentioned, whenever it shall come, their dispersion will cease, and their blindness be removed. Glorious things are spoken of them by their own prophets, which do not seem, as yet, to have received their full and proper accomplishment. When the Gentiles had revolted from the true religion, revealed after the fall, the church subsisted, for two thousand years, in the family of Abraham. Since the apostacy of the Jews, it hath subsisted nearly the same space of time among the Gentiles. And what saith St Paul? “As ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief; even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy.”* The very mercy shewn to the Gentiles is to be a means of bringing the Jews to the faith: and perhaps, we can no where meet with an instance of a more popular and affectionate turn, than that, by which St Paul seems to find a reason for his zeal to convert the Gentiles, in his
love

* Luke xxi. 24.

† Rom. xi. 25,

† Rom. xi. 30, 31.

love to his own countrymen the Jews, that he may thereby provoke them to emulation. Let us second his endeavours to effect this, by our love and our good works: let us, in our lives and conversations, shew them a religion, whose attractive excellence may invite and compel them to embrace it. Nor let us omit to observe, that, as Gentiles, while we labour to promote their interest, we likewise shall, by so doing, promote our own. So signal an event, as the conversion of the Jews, cannot but operate again on the lukewarm and degenerate nations, as well as on those that are still unconverted, to the production of a more plentiful and joyful harvest, than has yet perhaps been seen. "For if the fall of them were the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness? If the casting away of them were the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" * The resurrection of Christianity, in all the splendor of truth, and the beauty of holiness!—Nor let us be staggered by the contrary appearances of things in the world. There cannot be more contrary, at the conversion of the Jews, than they were, at the conversion of the Gentiles. From the Jewish church, when in its lowest and most unpromising state, went forth those, who brought the nations to the faith; from the Gentile church, when in a condition equally low and unpromising, may go forth those, who shall cause Israel to return to it—Blessed times! Delightful prospect?—We see it, but not now; we behold it, but, perhaps, not near. We live, and probably, like the ancient patriarchs, we may die, not having received the promises. But a generation to be
born

* Rom. xi. 12, 15.

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born shall receive them, and shall praise the Lord, who thus, at different periods, "hath shut up all in unbelief, that he may" finally "have mercy upon all."—Happy in the mean season, shall we be, if, while we are preparing ourselves, we may, in any the least degree, by our prayers and our endeavours, contribute towards the preparation of our elder brethren, the once beloved and highly favoured seed of Abraham, for the approach of that awful and important day, when their and our Messiah, who, as at this time, came in humility, to abase the proud, shall return in glory, to exalt the humble.

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O

DISCOURSE IX.

THE BELOVED DISCIPLE.

JOHN xxi. 7.

That Disciple whom Jesus loved.

NO writings are better calculated to improve mankind, than those which relate the history of the lives of such persons, as have been famous, in their generations, for wisdom and virtue. We are apt to be terrified by the strictness and severity of holiness, while it meets us only in precept; but when we behold it realized in the example of one, made of the same flesh and blood, living in the same world, and exposed to the same temptations with ourselves, we are fired at the sight, with a noble emulation, and are ashamed of any longer fancying ourselves not able to do what so many others have done before us. St Augustine, in his Confessions, describing the conflicts he endured with temptation in his younger years, tells us, how greatly he was strengthened, and animated to the fight, by imagining he saw virtue standing, in a visible form, before his eyes, and pointing to the noble company of those who had been conspicuous examples of purity; with which consideration she gently reproached him in these words—"Why canst not thou do what *these* have done?" From the fair light of one good example, innumerable others may catch the heavenly flame, until the whole church become illuminated and adorned with

with bright and shining patterns of every thing that is lovely and praise worthy.

Biography hath also another advantage, namely that it is sure to *entertain*, because it gratifies that natural curiosity men have to be acquainted with the history of others; which curiosity is then directed to its proper end, when it incites us to make the wisdom and experience of past ages our own, in order to become proficient in the mystery of godliness, and to practise every art of virtuous living.

But what chiefly recommends this kind of writing to Christians is, the use made of it in the holy Scriptures, which are, for the most part, *historical*, the wisdom of God having thought it better to set before us the duties of our calling, as they present themselves in the life of Christ and those of his saints, than to give us any regular and exact system of them. The church, by the appointment of her festivals, hath contrived to turn our thoughts from time to time upon these lives, that so, neglect and forgetfulness may not deprive us of the many benefits resulting from a due contemplation of them.

The saint of this day is John the Apostle and Evangelist. And where will heraldry, among all her boasted titles of honour, find one that can stand in competition with that which was conferred upon him;—"The disciple whom Jesus loved!" Beloved of Him, who was himself the beloved of his Father! Could we suppose a prince to reign universal monarch over all the kingdoms of the world, the sole fountain of every kind of earthly honour to every individual man under the whole heavens, how gladly, at the hour of death, would he resign all, to be the beloved disciple of such a Master? And if nothing be esteemed too high a price for the favour of an earthly sovereign, a man,

whose breath is in his nostrils, what shall we not give to obtain the love of him who abideth for ever, and will make us partakers of his own immortality? We are all the disciples of Christ, and candidates for his favour. Let us, therefore, take a view of the life and character of the person who enjoyed so large a share of it, as to be stiled eminently——“that disciple whom Jesus loved;” since to be like him, is the way to be loved of our Master as he was.

St John was the son of Zebedee and Salome; the same Salome whose pious care had provided spices to embalm the body of our Lord, when Mary Magdalen and she, coming early to the sepulchre, found him risen from the dead. The place of his birth was one of the sea towns in Galilee, probably either Bethsaida, or Capernaum, where, with his father Zebedee, and his elder brother James, afterwards distinguished from another of that name, by the title of *St James the Great*; he followed the fishing trade. Youth is no obstacle in the way of obtaining the favour of Christ. The disciple whom he loved was the youngest of all the Apostles. And certain it is, that religion never appears to greater advantage, than in the persons of those who “remember their Creator in the days of their youth,” and are admitted early into the number of the disciples of the holy Jesus. It is then like a diamond set in gold. There is something more noble in renouncing the world for the love of Christ, when the relish for sensible enjoyments is at the highest, than there can be in doing it when the evil days come, in which there is no farther pleasure or satisfaction to be had in earthly things. He surely is not so likely to accomplish his journey, who begins it when the sun is going down, as he is, who sets out at the hour of its rising.

rising. Youth, like the morning, is the proper season for every task that requires time and pains. Then all the powers of body and soul are fresh and vigorous, as those of one awaked from a sound and kindly sleep. Then is the golden opportunity, the sweet hour of prime, and the day is before us. "The night cometh, when no man can work. I have written unto you, young men (saith John himself,) because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one."* Rejoice then, O young man, in thy youth, not because thou art not able to riot in excess and wantonness as the heathen who know not God, but because thou hast it in thy power to become, like the youthful John, the beloved of thy Master, who seeketh such to worship him.

Nor let him of low degree neglect to take comfort in the consideration, that the beloved disciple of Christ was a common, *fisherman*. The distinctions of high and low, rich and poor, noble and vulgar, obtain in this world, and in this world only. In the kingdom of God they cease, and are no more. There virtue only gives precedence, and the meanest mechanic takes place of the nobles and kings of the earth, if he were a better Christian than they were. The vanity and the folly of those, whose confidence is placed in titles and pedigrees, will then appear in its proper light, when the supposed carpenter's son shall be seen on his throne of glory, and the fisherman seated at his right hand.

The account of John being called by our blessed Lord, from his employment of fishing, to that of preaching the Gospel, is thus given us, Mat. iv. 21. "And Jesus going on from thence," that is, from the place where he had just before called Peter and

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Andrew,

* 1 John ii. 14.

Andrew, "saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. And they immediately left the ship, and their father, and followed him." Their minds had been prepared for the advent of the Messiah by the sermons of the Baptist, who indeed had pointed him out to Andrew, and another disciple, not improbably John himself, for the Lamb of God. Upon his appearance and call, therefore, they readily received and obeyed him, laying the foundation of the Christian building in the renunciation of the world. And here it always must be laid by every one who is desirous of being "the disciple whom Jesus loveth." All are not called to forsake their occupations, and to commence preachers, as the Apostles were, Christ having appointed in his church a regular way of entering into the ministry; and at this door, when duly prepared for it by a suitable education, all are now to enter, who find themselves inclined and disposed by the good Spirit of God to undertake that blessed work. But every one is called to be ready, in heart and mind, to quit all that comes in competition with duty, and to follow the Saviour in the path of holy living. It is necessary for us all to leave those companies, and engagements, and ways of living which ensnare our souls, and entangle our affections in the toils of sin. And when duty to God requires it, we must forsake our friends and relations, rather than reject the salvation of Christ. Whoever is in error, or in sin, will, by the good providence of God, be often called to come out of it in the course of his life. He shall, perhaps, hear a sermon that shews him to himself, and awakens him; or some kind and charitable friend shall admonish him; or the holy

holy Spirit shall cause his own conscience to be his reprover. Then, O sinner, it is, that Jesus calleth *thee*. Obey him instantly; leave all that, whatever it be, whereby thou offendeſt, though near and dear to thee; join thyſelf to him, as thy Maſter, and director, in all things; and thou, as well as St John, ſhalt be beloved of him.

When our Lord gave his Apoſtles their commiſſion to preach the Goſpel, he ſurnamed our Evangelist and his brother James, *Beaenrges*, that is, in our language, *Sons of thunder*. Thereby he intimated the powerful effects of their preaching that word, which is frequently compared to thunder; being, like that, the voice of God ſpeaking from heaven, mighty in its operation. If the one ſhake the earth, throw down lofty trees and towers, and by the lightning which accompanied it, diſſolve the hardeſt ſubſtances, the other ſhakeſh the empire of ſin, caſteth down every thing which exalteth itſelf againſt heaven, blaſting and conſuming the corruption of the heart. Such are the effects of the word, when preached with power: and happy are they who experience them, in reading and hearing the Goſpels, and more eſpecially that of St John, who, on the wings of contemplation and faith, ſoaring aloft, like his own eagle, bears the thunder of the word, and cauſes its glorious voice to be heard under the whole heaven.

In the courſe of the evangelical hiſtory, we find St John, in conjunction with St Peter and St James, admitted to the knowledge and view of ſome more private miracles and tranſactions, when the other Apoſtles had not that honour. Theſe were the three who attended their Maſter, when he raiſed the daughter of Jairus from the dead. "He ſuffered no man to go in, ſave Peter, and James, and John."

John." And this is, in some sense, the happy lot of every disciple whom Jesus loveth. For although he no more "know Christ after the flesh," or see him working his miracles in person, as St John did, yet, by faith, the wonders of divine love and mercy are manifest unto him; and he beholds accomplished in himself and others that great work, which the miracles of Christ were designed to represent, the work of conversion and salvation. This work Jesus only can effect, and none but his beloved disciples know and understand it. This secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he sheweth to them the glory of his power in raising a soul from sin to righteousness, no less than he sheweth it to the Apostles in raising the maid from death to life.

The same three disciples accompanied their Lord, exclusive of all the rest, at the two most remarkable scenes of his exaltation and humiliation; that is to say, when he was transfigured upon mount Tabor, and when he was in an agony, in the garden of Gethsemane. With regard to the former we read, that "he took Peter, and James, and John, up into an high mountain, apart, and was transfigured before them." There they beheld his mortal body suddenly clothed upon with light, as with a garment; they beheld his glory, as the glory of the only begotten; they saw the Sun of Righteousness shining in his strength; they saw Moses and Elias glorified with him, as the Law and the Prophets always appear, when seen in company with Jesus; and they heard the voice from heaven declaring him to be the beloved of the Father. Again at his passion, "he taketh with him Peter, and the two sons of Zebedee, James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and very heavy."

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vy." Then they beheld him encompassed with the infirmities of a man, and beset by the powers of darkness; they beheld him humbled under the load of our sins; they saw the Sun overcast with a cloud; and heard the same divine person praying in a bitter agony, as one smitten of God in his anger, and afflicted unto death. And happy is every disciple, whom Jesus so loveth, as to admit him, by faith, to behold and dwell upon the contemplation of his blessed Master, in these his two states of exaltation and humiliation; the glory of his divine, and the sufferings of his human nature. These are subjects, on which a man can never meditate, but with infinite profit and advantage. By ascending the holy mount, and there viewing, in the transfiguration of Jesus, the glory of his person, and an ensample of that glory which he shall bestow on his saints, at the resurrection, he is armed against the pain and shame of the cross, and strengthened to undergo his portion of sufferings in the world. By attending his Redeemer in the garden, during his agony, he learns the intolerable punishments due to sin, and the amazing love of him who would descend from Tabor to Gethsemane, to bear them for sinners; he is prepared to take up his cross, and to be conformed to Christ in sufferings, from thence looking back to the glory which the Son of God left for a time, that he might bestow it on his beloved disciples for ever. Whosoever hath so digested in his heart these two subjects, as to be able to reduce the considerations on them to practice, hath attended his Master, with St John, on the mount, and in the garden.

Three times we hear in the Gospels the beloved Disciple reproved by his Master, to shew us that whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth and purgeth,
till,

till, like the branch of a well dressed vine, he bring forth more and better fruit. Once, a spark of ambition, lighting upon the spirits of the two brothers, James and John, had suddenly inflamed them with a vehement desire of pre-eminence above their colleagues in the ministry: they wanted to "sit, one on his right hand, and the other on his left, in his kingdom." Our Lord gave them to understand, that they, who were called to be his disciples and Apostles, were called to do his work, to labour and to suffer for the service of the church, and the salvation of souls, and should esteem it sufficient to be exalted, like their blessed Master, in heaven, after the work was done. Thus the two young candidates for promotion stood reprov'd. Made wiser by the instructions of their Lord, and the descent of the Holy Ghost upon them at the day of Pentecost, they thought no more of preceding their brethren, except in diligence and patience: they renounced self, preached the Gospel, suffered persecution, were crowned indeed, but it was with thorns: and thus, at length, in a far better sense, they obtained their wish, of sitting upon thrones with Christ, in his kingdom.

At another time the two disciples James and John, not bearing to see their Lord rejected by the schismatical Samaritans, were for calling fire from heaven to consume them, after the example of the prophet Elijah. But Christ rebuked them, telling them, "they knew not what manner of Spirit they were of, for the son of man was come to save the lives of men, not to destroy them." The present is the day of grace and mercy, long suffering and forbearance, with Christ, and it ought to be so with his disciples. The hour is coming, when, like Elijah, who represented him in his judicial capacity, he shall

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shall execute the vengeance written, and burn up his enemies on every side. But the time is not yet.

The third reproof St John met with from his Master was likewise for an instance of indiscreet zeal, in forbidding a person to cast out devils in Christ's name, because he followed not them. "Forbid him not (says Christ) for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us, is on our part. For whoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, he shall not lose his reward."* No emulation or jealousy should prevent our encouraging every man to do good, though not in all points as we are, or could wish him to be. Whatever real good he does, it is God who does it in him, and in time that God may reveal all other things to him; towards which, we ourselves, by treating him with tenderness and kindness may be made instrumental.

But these offences, upon Christ's admonitions, having been repented of and forsaken, they deprived not our Apostle of the place he had obtained in his Lord's favour. For at the last supper we find him sitting next to Jesus, and, as the manner then was, reclining on his breast: as it is the privilege of the beloved disciple, when admitted to the supper of the Lamb, to pour all his prayers and complaints into the bosom of his Redeemer, who is always ready to hear, always mighty to save.

At the apprehension of Jesus, John fled with the rest, but, quickly returning again, entered into the High Priest's palace, and attended his blessed Master through every stage of his passion, till we behold him taking his station at the foot of the cross, where

* Mark ix. 38.

where he is usually drawn in pictures of the crucifixion, with a countenance full of grief and love unutterable. From the cross Jesus commended his holy mother to the care of St John, who from thenceforth, happy in an opportunity of shewing his love to his Lord, as well as of entertaining such a guest, "took her to his own home," where she continued till her death, treated by him with the duty and affection of a son. Let the disciple, then, who would shew himself worthy the love of Christ, often contemplate and sympathize with his suffering Lord, placing himself, in imagination, at the foot of the cross, and looking, with the eye of faith on him who was crucified thereon; let him abide by the persecuted truth and the afflicted servants of Jesus, in the hour of darkness and sorrow; and let him, for Christ's sake, and in obedience to his repeated injunctions, honour and shew kindness to the church, so long as he lives, and be a dutiful son to her.

Upon the first tidings of the resurrection, St John, running with St Peter, outran him, and came first to the sepulchre, as the soul, that has the love of Christ abiding in her, will always be foremost in quest of him.—It was St John who discovered Jesus to St Peter, when he appeared in the habit of a stranger, at the sea of Tiberias. "That disciple whom Jesus loved, saith to Peter, it is the Lord." He who loves Christ, will always know him when he comes in the disguise of a *stranger*, or a *poor man*: he will know, that *it is the Lord* who asks relief of him in their persons; and he will inform others of the same great truth.—It was concerning St John that a report went among the disciples as if he was never to die, grounded by mistake on our Lord's answer to St Peter's question
—"Lord

“Lord, what shall this man do? If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?” But, alas, St John loved Christ too well, to think an exemption from death, for the sake of living in such a world as this, a thing to be desired. And whoever loves his Master as he did, will be of the same opinion.

After the effusion of the Spirit at the day of Pentecost, we read of St John, in the character of an Apostle, using his gifts for the good of mankind, healing the sick, preaching the Gospel, thrown into prison, and brought forth before the Jewish council, but still undaunted in bearing his testimony; herein leaving an example to his successors, the ministers of Christ, through all generations.

From the ecclesiastical histories we learn, that after preaching the Gospel, and founding many churches in Asia, he was sent bound from thence to Rome, at the command of the tyrant Domitian, who had him cast into a caldron of boiling oil. But the God, who preserved the three children in the midst of the fiery furnace, brought the Apostle out of the caldron unhurt, to convince us, that nothing can harm “the disciple whom Jesus loveth.” The emperor, however, not at all moved by this miraculous deliverance, banished the holy man to a wretched and comfortless island, called Patmos, where he saw heaven opened and beheld those glorious visions recorded in the book of Revelation: as God often vouchsafes a larger portion of spiritual joys and comforts to his servants, when they are secluded from those of the world.

Upon the death of the emperor Domitian, many of his cruel edicts were revoked by his successor; when St John, taking advantage of the indulgence, returned to Ephesus: and finding Timothy the

bishop of that church martyred, he took upon himself the government of it, till in a good old age of about an hundred years, he most willingly resigned his meek and gentle spirit into the hands of his Lord and Saviour, to experience the fulness of his love, and possess the glories he had so often contemplated.

These are the great outlines of St John's life and character. But, after all, whoever would be thoroughly acquainted with him, in order to become like him, must survey and copy that fair picture which he hath drawn of himself in his divine writings, where we sometimes behold the lofty flights of the eagle, and at others hear the plaintive voice of the turtle; we behold him viewing and describing the glories of Christ in his Godhead and kingdom; we hear him relating the sweetly-sorrowful and loving discourses of his dear Master, in his state of humiliation. Let these holy books, therefore, be in our hands, until they shall have wrought their proper work in our hearts; that is to say, until, by believing the doctrines and practising the duties taught therein, we shall have learned to live the life of faith and charity. So shall we be CHRISTIANS, in word, and in deed; so shall we be true followers of the saint of this day; so shall we be "the DISCIPLES whom Jesus will LOVE."

DISCOURSE X.

RACHEL COMFORTED.

JER. xxxi. 15, 16, 17.

Thus saith the LORD, a voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping : Rachel, weeping for her children, refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not. Thus saith the LORD, Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears ; for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the LORD, and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope in thine end, saith the LORD, that thy children shall come again to their own border.

OF the events which beset the church of Israel in old time, many were by Providence ordained and disposed to be figurative of other events, in the latter days, relative to the church Christian, or Universal. Let it be supposed, for example, in the present instance, that the Babylonish captivity, and subsequent restoration, to which these words of Jeremiah relate, did, like the Egyptian bondage, and the redemption therefrom, represent that more wretched, durable, and general captivity, in which mankind were detained by their grand enemy, with the restoration from it, which the Son of God, as at this season, was born to effect. And let us try, upon this plan, to shew the beauty and propriety of the application which St Matthew has made of

the passage to the slaughter of the Bethlehemitish infants, and the lamentations of those who were thus bereaved of their children, by the sword of Herod.

It is not easy, perhaps, to find a more judicious illustration of the case in hand, than the following one, given by the excellently learned Dr JACKSON, to whose most useful labours, on a curious and difficult subject, I must here once for all, acknowledge myself indebted for the substance of what I am now about to lay before you.

“We know,” says this able Divine, “that a map, though in itself a thousand times less than the least parcel of inclosed ground, may represent the exact form or proportion of the country whose name it bears, though that be ten thousand times bigger than the largest field that our eyes can look upon. And thus hath the wisdom of God, under the same words and phrases, included two deliverances, of which the one is a map to the other. He therefore who shall deny passages to be literally meant of the deliverance of Judah and Benjamin from Babylon, because they are only fulfilled in our deliverance by Christ, will give the Jew no small advantage; he will commit as great an oversight, as if an heir, possessed of a goodly estate, should burn the map, or terrar of it, which his ancestors had truly taken for the benefit of their successors, if they should know how to use it, when any controversy should arise concerning the bounds or extent of their inheritance. The Jew, on the contrary, in denying these places to be meant of Christ and us, because they have been literally verified of the deliverance of his fathers by Zorobabel and Joshua the priest, is like a man distracted, who boasts he hath a goodly heritage, because he

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can shew the map, or engrossed terror of those lands, of which the law has deprived him, since he knew not how to use them aright."

In the prosecution of this design, permit me, in the

First place, To collect and present to you the historical circumstances concerning the person introduced by Jeremiah, as making lamentation over her children, and the occasion of her so doing, with the prophet's consolatory address to her, upon that occasion: after which we shall be prepared, in the

Second place, To take a view of those parallel circumstances, which offer themselves in the lamentation made by the Bethlehemitish mothers, and the cause thereof, with the consideration which was to administer comfort to *them*, in the day of their great and bitter affliction.

The mournful scene is laid by Jeremiah in Ramah, a city belonging to the tribe of Benjamin, of which tribe, it may be observed, the prophet himself was a member, as we learn from the first verse in his book; "The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that were in Anathoth, in the land of Benjamin." The person introduced by him, as making lamentation, is Rachel, the beloved wife of Jacob, and the mother of that tribe. She had before borne Joseph, at which time by divine instinct with allusion to the name just imposed, she said—"The LORD shall *add* to me another son." In child-birth, however, through the prevalence of her pains, she was induced to give up her former hopes of a second son, for lost. Her attendant endeavoured to comfort her with her own prediction; "Fear not, for thou shalt have this son also." Yet,

“when her soul was in departing (for she died!)” —never surely was there a more affecting parenthesis. —“when her soul was in departing (for she died!) she called his name *Benoni*,” that is, *the son of my sorrow*. “His father,” seeking to avert the omen with speed, “called him *Benjamin*,” or, *the son of the right hand*, that is of power and glory.

Heu nunquam vana parentum auguria—the observation of an heathen poet, is found more particularly verified in the history of the patriarchs, because among them there was often a foresight more than human, and the prospect into futurity was opened to them by a light from above. The different fates of the tribe of Benjamin seem to have answered the different names imposed at the birth of its founder, by father and mother. No tribe more valorous than that; none more afflicted with disasters and calamities. At one time slaughtered by its fellow tribes, almost to excision, a true *Benoni* to Rachel, who had she been alive, must have “wept for her children, with an exceeding bitter weeping;” at another, restored to populousness and prosperity, placed, as it were, at the head of the rest, furnishing the first king, who ruled God’s people Israel, and realizing the name and character of *Benjamin*, the *son of the right hand*.

Upon the revolt of the ten tribes, Benjamin adhered to Judah, then the royal tribe, the tribe that gave birth to David, the tribe from which, in the fulness of time, a greater than David was to descend. When Jeremiah uttered the words now under our consideration, Judah was closely besieged in Jerusalem by the Chaldean army, in whose way thither the land of Benjamin lay. It experienced, therefore, of course, all the horrors of invasion. It was miserably wasted, and its inhabitants were carried

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ried away into captivity. This is the reason why old Rachel still renews her former complaint, and will not be persuaded, but that Benjamin must still be *Benoni*. She and her daughters, (for under the name of Rachel we must comprehend all the woful mothers of that tribe) fill the heavens with their outcries, whilst their children are forced from their embraces into miserable bondage in Babylon. And though mention be only made of Ramah, a city of Benjamin, yet must we imagine the wailings to have been as loud and bitter about Bethlehem, which, though in the tribe of Judah, was upon the borders of Benjamin, and near unto the place where Rachel died; as we read in Genesis; "Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is *Bethlehem*, and Jacob set a pillar upon her grave; that is the pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day."* Such was "the voice heard" in the days of Jeremiah, the "lamentation, and the bitter weeping;" when "Rachel," as the general mother, and representative of all the mothers in the tribe, "weeping for her children, refused to be comforted, because they were not." As a people, they had no civil existence. They were, in that sense, lost; they were dead; they were gone into captivity.

It was under these circumstances, that the prophet addressed the disconsolate mother—considering him as a *Benjamite*, we may say, *his* disconsolate mother—"Thus saith the LORD, Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears; for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the LORD, and they shall come again from the land of the enemy; and there is hope in thine end, saith the LORD, that thy children shall come again to their own border."
—As if he had said in other words—

—Remember,

* Gen. xxxv. 20.

—Remember, O Rachel, my mother, the days that are past, and call to mind God's wonders of old time. Remember how thou sorrowedst, when thou broughtst forth my father Benjamin, as fearing lest he should have died with thee, or before thee. Yet after thy pains, hadst thou this joy, that a man was born into the world. And though thou didst impose upon him a name betokening sorrow, yet his father wisely changed it into one predictive of better things. Remember, when Benjamin, for the good of his brethren, was called to go down into Egypt, how Jacob supposed him lost, and complained that he was bereaved of his children. But notwithstanding these ill bodings, Benjamin, at length, returned in safety, with his brother Judah; the father was again blessed with the sight of his youngest and best beloved son, the light of his eyes and the staff of his old age. Such, at this time, my mother, is thy fear and sorrow; but greater, hereafter, shall be thy comfort, and thy joy. Benjamin is indeed led captive into Babylon; but *Judah* is once more gone with him, as his pledge, and if he bring him not back again, let the blame be his, yea mine, yea God's for ever. "For thus saith the LORD, if my covenant be not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth, then will I cast away the seed of Jacob and David my servant, so that I will not take any of his seed to be rulers over the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—for I will cause their captivity to return, and have mercy on them—yea I have sworn by my holiness that I will not fail David." Now, my mother, while this promise lasts, in general, to Israel, as Abraham's seed, Benjamin must have his portion in the blessing. And while it remains good in particular to the seed of David, Benjamin,

gamin, for his faithful adherence to Judah, in prosperity and adversity, must participate with him in the prerogative. And when the kingdom shall be restored, as restored it will be, whoever shall sit on the left hand, faithful Benjamin must sit on the right hand of the throne of David.——

This, taking all circumstances into the account, seems to have been the import of Jeremiah's consolatory address to Rachel, in the day of her calamity. And his words, or rather those of the Almighty, were, in their fullest import, made good to her. Within seventy years, it came to pass, that the posterity of Benjamin returned, with Judah, into the land of Promise, and inhabited Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and other bordering cities, promiscuously with the royal tribe. "Her work was rewarded;" her patient expectation, in faith and hope of the promises made her, failed not of its fruit, in the appointed season: her "children came again from the land of the enemy to their own border," as the LORD had foretold by his prophet; they "returned, and came to Sion with songs; joy was upon their heads," and in their hearts; "and sorrow and sighing flew away!"

We are now prepared to take a view, as was proposed in the

Second place, of those parallel circumstances, which offer themselves, in the lamentation of the Bethlehemitish mothers, and the cause thereof, with the consideration which was to administer comfort to *them*, in the day of their great and most bitter affliction.

The death of the tribe of Benjamin, in conjunction with the tribe of Judah, in the time of Jeremiah, was a civil death, a departure into captivity. Their restoration from it was, consequently, a civil restoration,

restoration, a restoration to their ancient city and polity, in their own land. The death of the Bethlehemitish infants was a bodily death, by the sword of Herod; their restoration must, therefore, be a restoration to the bodily life, thus violently taken from them, that is, it must be a resurrection. Rachel's present lamentation for the bodily death of her children must have a comfort answerable to it, as her former lamentation for their civil death had a comfort answerable to *that*. Let us see what analogy and proportion the sorrow and joy in one case bear to the sorrow and joy in the other.

There is no need to shock your feelings, by endeavouring to draw a picture at large of this day's most abominable massacre. Suffice it to say, that the bloody murder of children in their tenderest and most helpless estate, torn from the arms, and butchered, in such multitudes, before the eyes of their mothers, must again cause "a voice to be heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning;" great, beyond the conception of any, but those who then expressed, or were witnesses to it. We cannot read the words which describe it, without imagining that we hear Rachel, called from her tomb near Bethlehem, "weeping for her children;" that we see her turning away, and refusing to be comforted for her children, because they were not; because they were departed hence, and were no more to be found in the land of the living; they were led away into that other captivity, more wretched and durable than the captivity of Benjamin, with Judah, in Babylon; they were deprived of light and life, they were hurried from the warm and cheerful precincts of day, to be imprisoned in the cold and dark dominions of the king of terrors. And who can bring them from thence? Not the

High

High Priest Jothua, the son of Josedek ; not Zorobabel, who conducted their father from captivity ; not Sampson, though, in the prime of his strength, he carried away the gates of Gaza ; not David, nor their father Benjamin, though both had been alive to command, or lead the whole posterity of Israel. All these might have said of the sons of Rachel this day commemorated by us, as David did of his child—"We shall go to them, but they shall not return to us." But the holiest of the ancient priests and prophets, the mightiest among the ancient kings and rulers, were still subject to death, and had taken their last repose with the beggar in the dust. Where then is the wonted promise of Rachel's reward ? Who shall comfort her in this calamity ?

Nothing, certainly, can wear a more gloomy and comfortless aspect, than things here seem to do. Yet in this as in the former instance, "Thus saith the LORD" to the mourner, and who else can say it ?—"Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears ; for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the LORD, and they shall come again from the land of the enemy ; and there is hope in thine end, saith the LORD, that thy children shall come again to their own border."

Recollecting what hath been said above, and bearing in mind the circumstances of time and place, pointed out in the application made of the former part of the passage by St Matthew, we may suppose this latter part to speak to the Bethlehemitish mothers in some such manner as the following.—

——At Bethlehem, the birth place of Benjamin, where the pillar was erected over Rachel's grave, a child is born, who has caused the children of Benjamin and Judah once more to become *Ben-*
ni's

ni's, true *sons of sorrow* to their mothers; a character he himself is to sustain on earth, inasmuch, that "a sword shall pierce through the soul" of her that bare him. As the seed of the woman, and with regard to the nature derived from her, he is to be "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." But, like *Benjamin*, from his Father he shall receive a name expressive of far different things; "a name above every name; he shall be exalted from misery and mortality to "the *right hand* of the majesty in the heavens;" there to take possession of an inheritance in the true land of Promise. Of this his inheritance in a state of power and glory, he will not fail to make those partakers, whose blood has been shed by the executioners of Herod, on his account. Look upon this their final deliverance and restoration, as it is delineated in that map, or chart of it, the deliverance of your ancestors from the Babylonish captivity, and the restoration to their own land. Call to mind what was said by them, at that time, on the ground of their own happy experience.—"They that sow in tears, shall reap in joy; he that goeth forth, and weepeth," as if, ignorant of the art of husbandry, he feared the corn he was sowing would perish in the earth, "shall doubtless come again with joy, bringing his sheaves with him." The heavens, echoing with your cries, and the earth, moistened with your tears, are witnesses to men and angels, that you have more plentifully sowed in grief, than your ancestors. As the sorrows of your seed-time have abounded, so the joys of your harvest shall superabound. The LORD's promise of old is not yet expired, but extends, in full force, to you and yours. With what more precious seed could the land of Judah and Benjamin be sown, than the blood of
tender

tender infants, harmless and undefiled even in thought? Scattered upon the ground by cruel hands, it shall be gathered by the power of him, who dispenseth the breath of life to all things living. None of this seed shall be lost, or prove unfruitful. Every grain shall produce its ear, and every ear its proportion of incorruptible and pleasant fruit. Great, therefore, as your affliction is allowed to be, yet mourn not as they that have no hope, but, even in the midst of your bitter complaints, still remember, that Rachel's pains must have a joyful recompence, and her exceeding sorrows portend extraordinary comforts in the issue. Only let patience have its perfect work through faith, and that "work shall be rewarded" with the possession of the promises. For, through the Saviour who is born, "there is hope in the end," that, like as your fathers, in God's good time, "came again from the land of the enemy to their own border," so your children, whose untimely excision you lament, shall come again from the strong holds of the grave, whither they had been led away captive, to the lot of their inheritance in the heavenly Canaan, and the new Jerusalem, there to live and reign with him, for whom they have now suffered and died. *These* children of Judah and Benjamin, like their progenitors, "shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they, and you with them, shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall again flee away."

The words, thus explained, will suggest to us some useful reflections, suitable to the festival, on the case of the slaughtered *infants*, and that of the lamenting *mothers*.

With regard to the *infants*, we may observe the choice, made by the church, of proper persons to attend the blessed Jesus, upon the commemoration of his birth. These are St Stephen, St John, and the Innocents. He was born to suffer; and therefore, the festival of his nativity is immediately followed by the festivals of those who suffered for him. St Stephen was a martyr, and the first martyr, both in will and in deed: St John, the beloved disciple, was such in will, but not in deed, being miraculously preserved from the death intended for him by Domitian. The Innocents were martyrs in deed, but not in will, by reason of their tender age.

Of these last, however, it pleased the prince of martyrs to have his train composed, when he made his entry into the world, as at this season; a train of infants, suited to an infant Saviour; a train of Innocents, meet to follow the spotless Lamb, who came to convince the world of sin, and to redeem it in righteousness. They were the first-fruits offered to the Son of God, after his incarnation, and their blood the first that flowed on his account. They appeared as so many champions in the field, clad in the King's coat of armour, to intercept the blows directed against him.

The Christian poet, PRUDENTIUS, in one of his hymns, has an elegant and beautiful address to these young sufferers for their Redeemer——

*Salvete, flores Martyrum,
Quos, lucis ipso in limine,
Christi insecutor sustulit,
Ceu turbo nascentes rosas.
Vos, prima Christi victima,
Grex immolatorum tener,
Aram ante ipsam, simplices,
Palma et coronis luditis.*

“ Hail

"Hail ye first flowers of the evangelical spring, cut off by the sword of persecution, ere yet you had unfolded your leaves to the morning, as the early rose droops before the withering blast. Driven, like a flock of lambs, to the slaughter, you have the honour to compose the first sacrifice offered at the altar of Christ; before which, methinks I see your innocent simplicity sporting with the palms and the crowns held out to you from above."

So remarkable an event necessarily attracts our attention to that age, which is proposed by our Lord, as, in many respects, a model for us all to copy, in forming our tempers and dispositions. "They brought young children to Christ, that he should touch them, and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But Jesus was much displeased, and said, Suffer little children to come to me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God." And again, when the disciples "asked him, who should be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, he took a little child, and set him in the midst, and said, Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of God." To be fit for the inheritance of the saints in light, we must put off the passions which are too apt to infest us as *men*, ambition, pride, craft, envy, hatred, malice, anger, revenge, covetousness, and concupiscence of every sort, and put on their opposites, humility, meekness, modesty, charity, purity, simplicity; we must become such in heart and mind, by the discipline of religion, as little children are, by their age; possessed of the same unlimited confidence in the care of a Father, who, as we are assured, careth for us; looking up to him for all we want, and flying to him for protection from all we fear; never entertaining a suspicion of

our being forsaken, or neglected by him, nor the least inclination to resist his will; equally insensible to the promises and threatenings of the world; resigned to suffer, and not afraid to die, when we are called so to do; able to smile at the drawn dagger, and ready to embrace the arm that aims it at our heart.

This idea of a child of God was daily realized, to the admiration of the whole pagan world, in the first ages of the church. The same inexhaustible and all powerful grace will realize it in these latter days, when religion shall be considered by us as an art, rather than a science; when *non magna loquimur sed vivimus*, shall be the device adopted by the Christian philosopher; and the precepts of the Gospel shall be practised with as much diligence as that with which its evidences are studied.

And, lo, for our encouragement, in the portion of Scripture this day appointed for the Epistle, the veil is rent which separates the two worlds; the prospect is opened into another system; the "holiest of all" is disclosed; the celestial mount is discovered; and on its summit "we see a Lamb stand, with an hundred and forty four thousand," of the like sweet and innocent disposition, "having his Father's name written on their foreheads. These are they which follow the Lamb, whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the first-fruits unto God and the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile, for they were without fault before the throne of God." From their station they beckon us after them, shewing us, for our instruction and direction in the way, that "of such is the kingdom of heaven."

And now, we are ready, perhaps, to say with St Peter, on an occasion somewhat similar, It is
good

good for us to be here! let us make our abode on the mount! But the time is not yet. We must return, and conclude, as we began, with the lamenting *mothers*, whom we left behind us, in the valley of tears.

Their cries, like those of Rachel, portending the birth of a *Benoni*, a *son of sorrow*, teach us, his disciples, to expect sorrow for our portion in this life, and to look forward to another, for comfort and joy.

In the world, as in Rama, "a voice is heard, lamentation and weeping, and great mourning." Earthly possessions and satisfactions, of every sort, are, by their nature, transient. They *may* leave us; we *must* leave them. To him who views them, in their most settled state, with the eye of wisdom, they appear, as the air in the calmest day does to the philosopher through his telescope, ever undulating and fluctuating. If we place our happiness in them, we build upon the wave. It rolls from under us, and we sink into the depths of grief and despondency.

Children, relations, friends, honours, houses, lands, revenues, and endowments, the goods of nature and of fortune, nay even of grace itself, are only *lent*. It is our misfortune to fancy they are *given*. We start, therefore, and are angry, when the loan is called in. We think ourselves *masters*, when we are but *stewards*; and forget, that to each of us will it one day be said, "Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou must be no longer steward."

Youth dreams of joys unremitted, and pleasures uninterrupted; and sees not in the charming perspective the cross accidents that lie in wait to prevent their being so. But should no such accidents.

for a while intervene, to disturb the pleasing vision, age will certainly awake, and find it at an end. The scythe of time will be as effectual, though not so expeditious, as the sword of the persecutor; and without a Herod, Rachel, if she live long, will be heard lamenting; she will experience sorrows, in which the world can administer no adequate comfort. She must therefore look beyond it.

The patriarchs and people of God, in old time, were often delivered from adversity. They often enjoyed prosperity. But after all the wonders wrought for them, and all the blessings conferred upon them, the issue of things was still the same. These friends and favourites of heaven still saw their relations, frequently their children, falling around them, and at length dropped; themselves, into the grave, to be mourned over by those that survived them. This was the case even in the land of Promise itself. Deplorable indeed, therefore, and desperate, like the worst of the heathen, would have been their condition, had they not been taught, through temporal deliverances, and temporal prosperity, in a temporal land of Promise, to contemplate another deliverance from the power of the destroyer, another prosperity that should have no end, in another land of Promise, which should never be taken from them, and from which they should never be taken; where they, their parents, and their children, should meet again, to part no more. What else is "the hope of Israel," what else can it be, but a "resurrection from the dead."*

Nothing can be plainer than the words of the Apostle on this subject. Having enumerated the ancient worthies, from Abel to David and the succeeding prophets, he thus concludes; "These all, having

* Acts xxiv. 15. xxvi. 6. xxvii. 20.

having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise," * THE promise, emphatically, the grand promise, in faith of which they died, and of which all other promises were only shadows, and known by them to be such; "God having" all along foreseen and "provided some better thing for us;" better than any of those figurative promises which they did receive; to wit, an eternal redemption, and an eternal inheritance; that, in such eternal redemption and inheritance, "they, without us, should not be made perfect,"† as God intends that we, together with them, at the general resurrection, shall be made perfect in heaven.

If, then, the mothers in Judah and Benjamin had been properly instructed in the faith of the ancient church, when Jeremiah addressed to them the words we have been considering, though they must understand them immediately as a promise that their children should be delivered from Babylon, and brought back again to their own land; yet their thoughts would naturally be carried on, for further comfort, to that other deliverance and restoration from death, promised by all the holy prophets, since the world began; even as we may presume the thoughts of a Christian parent would now be, whose son was a slave in Barbary, should a prophet be sent to him, with the following message from God; "Your son is gone into captivity, but he shall certainly be redeemed from it."

This, however, is indisputable; that in the application which St Matthew has taught us to make of the passage, it can admit of no other construction; because there can be no deliverance from bodily death, but by a bodily resurrection.

Learn

* *ἡν ἐπαγγελίαν.*

† Heb. xi. 40.

Learn we, therefore, and a more important and useful lesson cannot be learned—whenever death deprives us of those who are near and dear to us, to comfort ourselves and one another with these words; and let each of us, as occasion for consolation shall offer itself, listen to Jeremiah's prophecy, as if it were spoken to himself; "Thus saith the LORD; Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears; for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the LORD, and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope in thine end, saith the LORD, that thy children," thy relations, or thy friends, "shall come again to their own border," that from the dark and desolate regions of the grave they shall come to the light and glory of the heavenly Jerusalem; where, as holy John tells us, "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying;" * where Rachel shall finally cease her lamentations, lay aside her mourning veil, and wipe away all tears for ever from her eyes.

* Rev. xxi. 4.

DISCOURSE XI.

THE CIRCUMCISION.

LUKE ii. 21.

And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel, before he was conceived in the womb.

THESE words conclude the Gospel for the day, taken from a chapter which hath afforded ample matter of wonder and delight through the course of the present joyful season, when the church, like the blessed virgin mother, is never seen, but with the holy child in her arms. By the portions already selected from it, we have been made to listen to the sermon preached by an angel upon the subject of the Nativity; and the sweet anthem, sung by the choir of heaven immediately after, are still sounding in our ears. With the happy and obedient shepherds we have been at Bethlehem, and there have seen "this great thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us;" and have found reason to return, like them, "glorifying and praising God for all the things, that we have heard and seen, as it was told unto us." Nor shall we ever forget, it is to be hoped, (at least, never, at this hallowed and gracious time) to imitate her example, who "kept all these sayings, and pondered them in her heart."

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We are now conducted from the birth to the circumcision of our Redeemer, an account of which immediately follows the history of the shepherds, in the words of the text. And very meet, and right, and our bounden duty it is, that we should at this time, and in this place, employ our thoughts upon it; seeing it was the beginning of sorrows to the Son of God, and the beginning of joy, because the beginning of redemption, to the sons of men, for whom the first blood of the all-propitiating victim was now shed. A stumbling block it may prove to the Jew, foolishness it may appear to the Greek, and to all those, who, like the one, desire a *sign* of earthly splendor and magnificence, or, like the other, seek after the *wisdom* of false philosophy: but to the intelligent, and therefore humble believer, Christ, in this state of weakness, pain, and sorrow, is "the wisdom of God" to contrive, "and the power of God" to effect the deliverance of his people.

It is observable, that whensoever, in the Scriptures, mention is made of any particular relative to the abasement, the infirmity, and the shame, submitted to by Christ, it is presently contrasted by something concerning his exaltation, his power, and his glory; that so, the objection arising in the mind from a view of the former, may be obviated at once by the consideration of the latter, and the Christian may never lose sight of that capital article of his faith, the union of the two natures, divine and human, in the person of his Saviour. Thus we behold him in swaddling clothes; but instantly we hear the heavenly host singing an Hallelujah to him. He lies in a manger; but the brightest star in the firmament points the way to his abode. He expires upon the cross; but all nature suffers with him

him, almost to a dissolution. And thus, in the instance now before us, he is circumcised indeed on earth, as the son of Abraham; but a name is given him from heaven, as the Son of God. For in these lowly and ignominious circumstances, he receives the name enjoined before to be imposed on him by the angel; a name above every name; a name which evil spirits fear, and good ones adore; a name, at which every knee should rejoice to bow, and which every tongue should exult to confess; since it is by this name that glory is given to God in the highest, peace restored to earth at war with its Maker, and good will streams forth to sinful men.

In order to unfold the mystery of the circumcision of Christ, it will be necessary to enquire into the institution of this rite, with the reason and end thereof. Moses (saith our Lord to the Jews) gave you circumcision, not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;* this being one of the many legal ceremonies, which were originally communicated to the ancient patriarchs, and afterwards reordained in writing by Moses. The first account of it occurs in the history of our father Abraham; and St Paul discoursing at large upon the point,† informeth us, that it was given as a “sign or seal of the righteousness, which is by faith.” Now the object of Abraham’s faith was redemption by the promised Seed, that is to say, by Messiah, who should spring from his loins; and in whom, by reason of that redemption, “all the nations of the earth were to be blessed” with the blessings of eternity. And the *righteousness* which is by such faith, consisteth in the justification of believers by the cutting off and doing away the body of sin through the

* John vii. 22.

† Rom. iv.

the sacrifice of Christ, by which they are pardoned and made holy, being separated from sin, and sin from them, in order to a final separation from every thing that offendeth, at the resurrection of the just. This is "the righteousness of faith," with which Abraham having been before invested, he received circumcision, not as any thing which could make him righteous, but as a *sign* and *seal* of that evangelical righteousness, "which he had being yet uncircumcised; to the end that he might be the father of all them who believe, though they be not circumcised;" and that we Gentiles, as well as the Jews, might become the children, and inherit the blessing of Abraham. But from the institution of this rite to the manifestation of the promised Seed, it became to the natural descendants of the patriarch Abraham, what baptism hath been ever since to the spiritual progeny of him, who is, in a much higher sense, *the Father of us all*; it became the sacrament of initiation into the true church and faith. Now, in a sacrament, the outward and visible sign is intended to introduce us to the inward and spiritual grace figured by it as a *sign*, conveyed by it as a *means*, and insured by it as a *pledge*. And what the inward and spiritual grace signified by circumcision was, not only St Paul, but Moses himself will tell us, who in the book of Deuteronomy expresseth himself in these terms; "Circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked."* And again; The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live."† From these passages laid together, the following truths seem to be fairly deducible; namely, First, That
circumcision

* Deut. x. 16.

† Deut. xxx. 6.

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circumcision was an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace to be wrought in the heart; Secondly, That this inward and spiritual grace was the cutting off and casting away of *sin*; Thirdly, That for this work they were not sufficient as of themselves, but their sufficiency was of *the Lord their God*, who would work in them, and with them, through faith, by the holy Spirit; Fourthly, That the effect and consequence of this spiritual circumcision would be the love of God shed abroad in their hearts, with its genuine fruit of unfeigned obedience to his commandments; and, Lastly, That this would prepare the way to eternal life; "that thou mayest LIVE," saith Moses; "that thou mayest live," not only on earth, under grace, but hereafter in glory: since "purification of the heart" is in order to a better life in that celestial Canaan, the ultimate end of all the promises, that good land which the Lord our God shall give to every Israelite indeed, and in which he himself, after having been the "shield" of Abraham and his seed, shall be their "exceeding great reward." * And so it is written; "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." † Thus do these two texts from the writings of Moses involve in them the substance of the Gospel; they begin with the cleansing of the heart from sin, thence proceeding on to the love of God till they terminate in the beatific vision of him in an endless life. And could the Jews have read their law, without that veil, which infidelity had drawn over the eyes of their understanding; could they have beheld, with open face, the glory of the Lord, enshrined in the Mosaic mysteries; could they have discerned the "apple of gold" through the "net-work of silver," ‡ instead of mistaking the

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casket

* Gen. xv. 1.

† Matth. v. 8.

‡ Prov. xxv. 11.

casket for the jewel which it contained and preserved; they had then saved an Apostle the trouble of informing them, that "he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly, nor is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God."*

We will venture then to suppose, that the institution of the rite now before us, with the reason and end thereof, is sufficiently cleared, and circumcision proved to be a sacramental sign of the cutting off and casting away of sin from the heart. But what mean ye then, as saith St Bernard, by circumcising the child Jesus, who did no sin, and knew none; who was conceived in the womb of a virgin, by the Spirit of eternal purity; why must he undergo this painful ceremony? To this we answer, besides the example of humility and obedience herein afforded us by our Lord; as also the proof from hence resulting of the reality of his human nature; besides these collateral considerations, I say; the reason why Christ was, as on this day, circumcised, is the same with the reason why he was born, why he lived, and why he died. What he did, and what he suffered, he did and suffered not for himself, but for us. The whole of this momentous and salutary truth is expressed by the Apostle in those few words; "He was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might become the righteousness of God in him."† He bore our griefs, that we might enter into his joy: he put on the bloody garment of sin and death, that we might be invested with the white and spotless robes of righteousness and life. He became not only one

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* Rom. ii. 28.

† 2 Cor. v. 21.

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with us, as the head is with the members; but one *for* us, or in our *stead*, as a surety is for a debtor. And therefore, though, as the all perfect Son of God, he could need neither circumcision nor baptism, yet, as the suffering representative of fallen human nature, he submitted to both, with the same view, namely, "to fulfil all righteousness." This was the argument he used to John, in the case of his baptism, and it holdeth equally in that of his circumcision. For having once undertaken to appear as our surety and substitute, it became incumbent on him "to fulfil all righteousness," to perform what we should have performed, and to suffer for what we did not perform. As the children therefore were compounded of flesh and blood, he partook of the same; he was "made of a woman:" as they were circumcised, he was circumcised also; he was "made under the law." * And indeed, it had profited us nothing, that he was made of a woman, had he not likewise been "made under the law;" for then the law could never have apprehended him; the law, with its penalties, having no concern with a person, who, like him, was not an offender against it. For "the law was not made for the righteous, but for the lawless and disobedient." † We are the transgressors, the debtors, whose bond was forfeited, and "the handwriting of condemnation" standing in full force against us. But Christ, by submitting to the act of circumcision, voluntarily put himself under the law, and took the whole burthen of it, as he did the cross, upon his own shoulders: since it is an axiom in theology, that "if any man be circumcised, he is a debtor to do the whole law." ‡ Christ therefore, by being *circumcised*, be-

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came

* Gal. iv. 4. † 1 Tim. i. 9. ‡ Gal. v. 3.

came that *debtor*, and entered into covenant anew, as man's surety, to pay the utmost farthing. But the debt was not a pecuniary one. The law was capital, and death the penalty incurred by the breach of it. Life was the debt due from us, and paid by Christ to the justice of heaven. And therefore, when he took upon himself the obligation of paying it, which was as at this time, the covenant was made in the body of his flesh, and signed with his precious blood; to shew that in him, now "made sin for us," the body of sin was to be cut off and destroyed; that the curse of the law had seized on him as the malefactor, (for such he vouchsafed to be accounted, and among such he did not disdain to be numbered) and that his disciples, who were really malefactors, might therefore "go their way" * free; the blood now shed being an earnest, that in due time he would shed the whole, and make his human nature an offering for sin. This he hid upon the cross, when he paid indeed the uttermost farthing that the law itself could demand, and so fulfilled all justice; thereby "cancelling the hand writing of ordinances, taking it out of the way, and nailing it to his cross," † never more to appear in judgment against us. And accordingly, to our great and endless comfort, it is declared from the apostolical chair, that "there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." ‡

The way therefore is now open for us to proceed to a consideration of the imposition of the name JESUS, at the time of circumcision. For then it was, that Christ laid himself under the obligation to *SAVE*, and began to answer to that sacred and glorious name. From the very moment in which

* John xviii. 8.

† Col. ii. 14.

‡ Rom. v. i.

a sufficient surety appears, and becomes responsible for the debt, "deliver the man," saith the creditor, "I have found a ransom." * The greatness of the deliverance may be estimated by the value of the ransom; and reciprocally, the value of the ransom by the greatness of the deliverance. The ransom was the dear and only Son of God; the deliverance was a deliverance from all the terrors of angry and avenging heaven. "The law worketh wrath;" † because it condemneth the transgressors thereof, that is, without the intervention of the evangelical covenant of repentance, it condemneth every child of Adam; seeing that according to the conclusion fairly deduced by the same Apostle from undeniable premises, "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." ‡

But who shall express, or conceive adequate ideas of that condemnation, from which Christ hath delivered us; of that wrath, which the law worketh against every man, who shall have no surety to appear for him, in the day when God shall come to require an account? As far indeed as the elements of nature can display to human sense the terrible majesty of their great Creator: as far as his eternal power and Godhead can be manifested to the sons of earth by the things that are made; so far did it once please God to manifest and display them; and that, upon an occasion, which evidently pointeth out to us his intention in so doing. The occasion, I mean, was the giving of the law, the circumstances of which are presumed to be the best and fullest comment upon the apostolical text before cited; "The law worketh wrath."

Let imagination therefore place us for a few minutes at the foot of Sinai, where every man must

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place

* Job xxxiii. 24.

† Rom. iv. 25.

Rom. iii. 23.

place himself, who would form an estimate of the salvation wrought for him by Jesus Christ. We shall find the mountain carefully fenced about, and guarded by this awful prohibition; "Charge the people, lest they break through unto the Lord to gaze, and many of them perish.—For if so much as a beast touch the mountain, he shall be stoned, or struck through with a dart. Take heed to yourselves therefore, stand at the nether part of the mount."* There then let us take our station, and behold a thick cloud, blackness of darkness, settling upon the mountain, and diffusing itself around; in the midst of this most horrible night, the flame of devouring fire rolling forth in dreadful waves, and burning to the midst of heaven; lightnings every moment issuing from it, and breaking through the surrounding gloom; the air incessantly thundering from every quarter; and above all, the voice of a trumpet piercing the heavens, sounding long, and waxing louder and louder; the mountain smoking like a furnace, and quaking greatly from its foundations; all the people in the camp trembling and dying for fear: nay, "so terrible was the sight, that even Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake."† And if Moses, who, as the figure of him that should come, had the honour to be a mediator between an offended God and his offending people, if he exceedingly feared and quaked at this terrible sight, what must be the state of the careless sinner, who having incurred all this heavy displeasure, nor ever employed an hour in meditating his escape, shall be suddenly called upon by death to meet it all, unprepared? And who is there among us, that thinks himself prepared to meet his God, as he appeared upon mount Sinai? Let the
experiment

* Exod. xix. 12, 17, 21.

† Heb. xii. 21.

experiment be made only in an ordinary tempest of thunder and lightning. No sooner is that glorious voice of Jehovah heard in the heavens, but the earth trembles and is still. "Hear attentively," saith Elihu in Job, "the noise of his voice, and the sound that goeth out of his mouth. He directeth it under the whole heaven; and his lightning to the ends of the earth. At this my heart trembleth, and is moved out of his place."† What sensations then would be produced in the hearts even of the best of men by a manifestation like that at Sinai? And if the righteous scarcely sustain it, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

Nor let any man think himself unconcerned in that scene, because it is past. The terrors of mount Sinai are still in force against every one who is not found in Christ Jesus; unless we suppose that the despisers of the Gospel will fare better than the contemners of the Law, and not rather be thought worthy of much sorer punishment. The hour is coming, when our ears shall hear more terrifying sounds, than were seen and heard by the house of Israel in the wilderness. For yet a little while, and the same God who was revealed from heaven in flaming fire to give the law, shall again be revealed from heaven in flaming fire to enquire how it hath been observed, and to take vengeance on those who have not secured unto themselves a sponsor to stand in the gap for them. So that although the things seen and heard at mount Sinai did not affect us, yet the argument enlarged upon by the Apostle, Heb. xii. undoubtedly doth; namely, that if the law was so terrible, when enacted, how much more terrible must it be when required at our hands by God, coming in glorious majesty
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* Job xxxvii. 1, 2, 3.

to judge the world? Then shall there be blackness of darkness, not for a time, but for ever; then shall the lightnings of Sinai be extended over all the earth, and a fire be kindled which shall not be quenched; then shall the heavens pass away with the noise of a great and intolerable thunder; a far louder trumpet shall then not only pierce the ears of the living, but also sound an alarm through all the regions of the grave, and awaken those who shall have slept for ages in the dust; then he whose voice formerly shook the earth, shall fulfil his promise, "Yet once more I shake not the earth only but also heaven:"* both of which shall be removed, and their place no more be found; then shall all the tribes of the earth, as well as those of Israel, tremble, and mourn, and wail; and who, where is he, that thinketh he shall not then find cause to say with Moses, "So terrible is the sight, that I exceedingly fear and quake!"

Such therefore is the wrath which the law worketh, and such is the condemnation of that "hand writing against us," from which our dear Master and Redeemer, as at this time, the time of his circumcision, engaged to rescue all who should believe in him. Then it was, that he took upon himself the law, and the penalty annexed to the breach of it, being (as an Apostle has expressed it) "made a curse for us, to redeem us from the curse of the law;"† that is, to deliver us from the black darkness of sin and death; from the thunders and lightnings of the Father's vengeance; from the dread of the trumpet of eternal judgment; the dissolution and destruction of the world; the words of condemnation, and the unextinguishable flame: and having delivered us from all these terrors, to introduce
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* Heb. xii. 26.

† Gal. iii. 13.

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us to a far different scene of things ; to the light of righteousness and immortality ; to the peace and love of God ; to the still small voice of evangelical grace ; to the harps of angels, and the music of Hallelujahs ; to the final sentence of absolution, " Come, ye blessed ;" to a kingdom that cannot be moved ; to the joys of heaven, and the glories of eternity. " For we are not come unto the mount that might be touched, (the palpable, material mount) that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words, which voice they that heard, intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more (for they could not endure that which was commanded, and if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned or thrust through with a dart : and so terrible was the sight, that even Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake). But we are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first born which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than that of Abel ;"* the one crying as loud for mercy, as the other did for vengeance. And therefore, when this blood of sprinkling was first shed, " when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel, before he was conceived in the womb, saying, Thou shalt call his name JESUS, for he shall save his people from their sins."*

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* Heb. xii. 18, &c.

† Matth. i. 21.

The doctrine of the day being thus stated and explicated, nothing remains, but that we reduce it to practice. Something Christ hath left us, in every mystery, to believe, and to admire; something also to love, and to imitate. The legal ceremony of circumcision, having received its accomplishment in Jesus, became of course null and void; inasmuch, that the performance of it afterwards was justly deemed a renunciation of Christ, a denial of his advent in the flesh; for so the Apostle witnesseth; "Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing."† This is the unhappy case of the Jews, to this day; who, having lost the evangelical faith of their fathers, still continue under the law, with all its judgments in force against them; and this must be their case, until their heart shall turn to the Lord their God, until they shall be led to acknowledge the holy Jesus, as the end of the law, and the Saviour of the world. In the mean time, by us who believe, the doctrine is to be transmitted from the head to the heart, there by the operation of the eternal Spirit to do away what St James styleth "the superfluity of maliciousness,"† cleansing us from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, that we may perfect holiness in the fear of God. It is true, that sin was mystically cut off, and destroyed, in the body of Christ; but wherefore? That it might live and flourish in us? God forbid. Christ was made sin for us, not that we might continue in sin, but that we might become the righteousness of God in him. For if we be dead to sin in Christ our representative, how can we, consistently with our profession, live any longer therein? How can the circumcision of Christ profit any one, who celebrates the

* Gal. v. 2.

† Περὶ περιστομῆς νόμου.—Jam. i. 1.

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the festival as constantly as it returns, himself still continuing "uncircumcised in heart and ears?" Or, in other words, how can his baptism save him, whose life is one perpetual renunciation of it? For baptism, which succeeded in the place of circumcision, takes up the mystery, where that left it. The one sheweth sin cut off, in and with the body of Christ; the other representeth it as buried in his grave, and the new man, through the power of his resurrection, risen again, without sin, unto salvation. And one cannot but admire the manner in which St Paul hath interwoven the spiritual application of these two sacraments of the old and new law. "Ye are compleat (saith he to his Colossians) in Christ, who is the head of all principality and power. In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by the circumcision of Christ buried in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him, through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead: and you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses."* We are to labour therefore after the spirit and power of these two sacraments in our hearts, that they may be manifested in our lives and conversations. Otherwise, the letter of them can only condemn us. For as he is not a Jew, so neither is he a Christian, who is one outwardly; but he is a true Jew, and he is a true Christian, who is so inwardly; from whose heart and members the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life are cut off: who is dead and buried to sin, and risen again to righteousness. This blessed work sacramentally shewn forth and begun in baptism, is

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* Col. ii. 10.

to be continued through life by the successive renovations of repentance, by daily accessions of knowledge, faith, and charity, producing and carrying on a gradual growth in grace, until it be perfected. And as the season annually returns, when it pleaseth God to begin again his work which men so often behold, of renewing the face of the earth, by commanding the sun to revisit and cheer our world, where nature, during his absence, hath drooped and languished away, but is again to be raised from the death and deformity of winter, to the life and beauty of spring, until, by a silent, progressive operation, the year being crowned with the loving kindness of the Lord; are we not hereby directed to look up by faith to the great luminary of the intellectual world, who declareth from his glorious throne, "Behold I make all things new;"* beseeching him to arise upon us with healing in his wings; to visit us with the light of his countenance and the joy of his salvation, that so old things may pass away, and we may be renewed in the spirit of our minds; to disperse the clouds and darkness of ignorance; to lay the wintry storms and tempests of disordered passions, and introduce into our hearts the calm and gladsome spring of everlasting righteousness and peace; to pour upon the year all the blessings of that glorious festival, with which it commenceth; and, in one word, by making it HOLY, to make it HAPPY.

* Rev. xxi. 5.

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DISCOURSE XII.

THE EPIPHANY.

MATTH. ii. 1, 2.

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

IN this remarkable part of sacred story there are two particulars, on which, at the present season, we are called upon to employ our meditations. And as they will suggest ample matter for that purpose, I shall crave your leave to enter upon a discussion of them without any farther preface.

The particulars are these :

First, The *persons* here mentioned by St Matthew.

Secondly, Their *journey*.

First, then, let us contemplate the *persons* here mentioned by St Matthew, their *country* and *condition*.

With regard to their *country*, the text gives us no farther information, than that they came from *the east*. Of the ancient expositors some mention Chaldea, others Persia; but others, among whom are Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Cyprian, and Epiphanius, with more probability perhaps, assign Arabia Felix, a country less distant from Judea, and lying to the south east of it; the same country

pointed out by the Psalmist, when, predicting the accession of the Gentiles, he saith, "The kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts:" the country from whence, attended by a train of camels bearing spices, came the queen of Sheba to the court of the temporary and representative PRINCE OF PEACE; the country particularly specified in the lx. chapter of Isaiah; "All they from Sheba* shall come; they shall bring gold and incense, and they shall shew forth the praises of the Lord:" a country remarkable, by the testimony of historians, for plenty of gold, and of the most precious aromatics: a country, in the neighbourhood of which Balaam uttered and left behind him his famous prophecy, concerning the "Star that should arise out of Jacob."

As to the *condition* of these eastern travellers, it is said by the Evangelist, they were *Magi*; a term then applied, among all the nations of the east, in its primary and good sense, to those who gave themselves up to the pursuit of wisdom and knowledge, by all the means in their power. They were the great mathematicians, philosophers, and divines of the ages in which they lived, and had no other knowledge but that which, by their own study, and the instructions of the ancients of their sect, they had attained unto. But as their credit in the world, on these accounts, was so great, that a learned man and a Magian became equivalent terms, the vulgar looking on their knowledge to be more than natural, entertained an opinion of them, as if they had been actuated and inspired by supernatural powers, in the same manner as has too frequently happened, at other times, and in other places. In the number of these Magi, or learned men, of old,
persons

* Sabea—extrema Arabia: Felicis regio, Persico sinui proxima.
VITRINGA in loc.

persons not only of noble but of royal extraction often thought proper to enlist themselves. Many, therefore, have imagined these Magi to have been such; and the supposition, all circumstances considered, is not improbable.

But the particular, of which we are certain, in which we are chiefly interested, and which at this time, claims our attention, is, that they were *Gentiles*, aliens, by nature, like ourselves, from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise.

In the family of Noah, the true religion was universal or catholic. It continued to be so, till the days of Abraham, when the general apostacy of the nations to idolatry made it necessary that a family should be called forth, and separated from the pollution that was in the world, to be the happy instrument of preserving faith upon earth, "till the seed should come, to whom the promise was made." By this step in the divine dispensations, it was never intended to "put the candle under a bushel, but to place it on a candlestick," and there to keep it burning, that it might give light to those that were in the house, and to those who should enter into it. Many, from time to time, did enter into it; and therefore many more might have entered in, had it so pleased them. The transactions of God with his chosen people were not carried on in a corner; and there was no period, in which he left himself without witness among the nations round about them. Let us take a cursory view of the divine proceedings, in this light only.

Of Abraham's call the inhabitants of the country from which he was called, and, in consequence of that call, departed for ever, could not have been ignorant; and as many as were disposed to obey

the admonition of heaven, might, doubtless, have had permission to attend him.

The patriarchal families, in their sojournings, travelled through many of the countries inhabited in those early ages. By the governors of those countries we find them treated with reverence, and acknowledged to be prophets, nay, "mighty princes of God." The story of their divine call and destination must have been the subject of conversation, wherever they came, nor would they be backward to make it so. They would, of course, communicate to others what heaven had communicated to them. They would exhort men, as they went, to save themselves from that untoward generation. That such conversations and such exhortations were not without fruit, we may conclude from the mention that is made of "the souls which they had gotten in Haran," or the persons they had converted, and adopted into the holy family. The behaviour of Abimelech and his subjects is very observable, and shews there was, even among *them*, a sense and fear of God, which, it is to be apprehended, we might now look for in vain, in countries calling themselves *Christian*.

The deliverance of Abraham's brother Lot, and the unparalleled overthrow of the cities of the plain, by fire from heaven, must have been a very awakening and affecting call to all within hearing.

In process of time, we find Egypt, then the most powerful and learned of nations, opening its hospitable arms to receive the family of Jacob, having owed its preservation, in the days of dearth to one of that family, ordained, in a wonderful manner, to save much people alive. Here the church was settled, increased, and flourished for more than three hundred years, bearing testimony to the true religion, in the eye of the world.

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Let any one consider with himself the astonishing series of miracles wrought by Moses on a stage so public as this; the passage through the Red Sea; the destruction of Pharaoh and his host; the march of the Israelitish army, with the divine Shechinah, or Glory, in the midst of it; the awful and tremendous appearance on mount Sinai, at the promulgation of the law; their entrance into Canaan; the passage of Jordan; the fall of Jericho; the execution of the devoured nations; could all these things be done, and the rumour of them not spread, in those days, among the nations, both those that were near, and those that were afar off?

The fame of this distinguished and extraordinary people must have increased with their conquests, till universal peace was established in the days of Solomon. To his court the princes of the earth resorted; struck with his glory, charmed with his wisdom, and desirous of being instructed by him. Would you know the exalted sentiments entertained by them of him, and of the people over whom he presided? Listen to the queen of Sheba speaking for them all. "It was a true report that I heard, in mine own land, of thine acts, and of thy wisdom. Howbeit, I believed not the words until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and behold, the half was not told me; thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard. Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom. Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel; because the Lord loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice." *

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* "In Solomon's time there were 150,000 proselytes in the land of Israel." *See the History of the Israelites, Part 3.*

The mission of the prophet Jonah to preach repentance to the inhabitants of the great city Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian empire, is an event, which deserves a place in your considerations on the subject before us.

When the Babylonian power was at its height under Nebuchadnezzar, the people of God, for their transgressions, were carried into captivity by him. Reflect upon the very remarkable incidents to which that captivity gave birth; the interpretation of the monarch's dreams; the accomplishment of one of them, by his degradation, and subsequent restoration; the preservation of the three children in the furnace, and of Daniel, in the den of lions; with the decrees, in favour of true religion, promulgated through the whole extent of that enormous empire, to which most of the kingdoms of the known world were at that time subject.

Upon the ruins of the Babylonian empire arose that of the Medes and Persians; the celebrated founder of which began his reign with the publication of a decree, for the return of God's chosen people to their own land, with leave to rebuild their city and temple.

The prosperity and felicity of Israel after their return from Babylon; the interview between the High Priest and Alexander, when upon his march to the conquest of Persia, as it stands recorded by Josephus; the well known exploits of the Maccabees against Antiochus; the connection formed, about

Part ii. Chap. ix. P. 84. This little book contains a concise, pleasing, and just account of the *manners, customs, laws, polity, and religion* of the Israelites. It is an excellent introduction to the reading of the Old Testament, and should be put into the hands of every young person. An elegant English version of it, by Mr FARNWORTH, dedicated to the present Archbishop of CANTERBURY, was printed in 1756, for WHISTON, WHITE, and BALDWIN.

bout that period, between the Jews and the Romans; the translation of the Scriptures into Greek, and the universal expectation produced thereby among the nations, of a ruler that should come out of Judea—All these considerations, though perhaps they are suffered, in the course of our reading to glide by us unobserved, as they occur separately, and unconnected with each other, yet when they are thrown together, and duly weighed, may serve greatly to assist us in forming our judgment concerning the state of the Gentiles, and the testimony from time to time borne to the true religion, by the then church of God, in the heathen world.* Notwithstanding the light heaven has been pleased to manifest, whether in former or in latter times, many, both individuals and nations, have still continued to sit in darkness, and the shadow of death. The fate of such it is not our business to determine. One thing we know, and more we cannot, more we need not know; that in the last great day, when that point and all others shall be finally settled, He is to settle them, who, before men and angels, “will be justified in his saying, and clear when he is judged.” What mercy can do, mercy will do. All iniquity shall then stop her mouth, and no person that shall be condemned, will have power or reason to complain. To the curiosity, which, negligent of its own interest in Christ, is ever anxiously enquiring into the future destination of those who never heard of him, the proper answer,

* The reader will find many curious and valuable observations upon this important and interesting subject, in the Bishop of CARLISLE's *Theory of Religion*, Part the 2nd; as also, in a dissertation of Dr WATERLAND, subjoined to *Scripture vindicated*. See also LELAND's *advantage and necessity of the Christian Revelation*, Part. i. Ch. 29.

swer, surely, is——“What is that to thee? Follow thou me.”

That the Jew, with the Scriptures in his hands, should be blind to the counsels of God respecting the Gentiles and their return to the church, is indeed truly marvellous. It was foretold, that the posterity of Japheth should one day “dwell in the tents of Shem;” * that in the promised seed of Abraham “all the nations of the earth should be blessed;” † that to Shiloh should “the gathering of the nations be.” ‡ Isaiah is very express, and faith; There shall be a root of Jesse, “which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek, and his rest shall be glorious. ||—It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation to the ends of the earth §—Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see; all they gather themselves together, they come to thee; thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee.” ¶ No less clear are several passages in the Psalms, which never failed to make
a part

* Gen. ix. 27.

† Gen. xii. 3.

‡ Gen. xlix. 10.

§ Ps. lxx. 10.

¶ Ps. lxx. 6.

¶ Isa. lx. 1. &c.

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a part of the synagogue service. "All the ends of the world shall remember, and turn unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before him.*—The princes of the nations shall be joined to the people of the God of Abraham.†—Praise the Lord all ye heathen, praise him all ye nations; for his merciful kindness is ever more and more towards us, and the truth of the Lord endureth for ever."‡

The event, which bore so capital a share in the gracious designs of the Almighty, which was thus predicted, and celebrated beforehand, by patriarchs and prophets, began, as at this season, to take place, by the coming of the eastern sages to Bethlehem, in the name of us all, as representatives of the heathen world. They were the first-fruits of that glorious harvest, afterwards reaped and gathered by the Apostles and their successors; they were the standard-bearers of that noble army, which, from the four quarters of the globe, hath since marched into the church, throw the gates mercifully thrown open to admit them. From the consideration of the *persons* mentioned in the text, we proceed therefore to consider,

Secondly, their *journey*; the *occasion*, and the *end* of it; "They came to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born king of Jews? For we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him."

The birth of Christ was first revealed to the shepherds, who were Jews. For that purpose, the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and the *glory* of the Lord shone round about them; a proper intimation of *his* appearance, at the brightness of whose rising on the intellectual world, darkness

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* Ps. xxii. 27.

† Ps. xlvii. 9.

‡ Ps. cxvii.

was to vanish, and the shadows fly away. A sign of the same import was vouchsafed to the Gentiles as their conductor to the new born Redeemer of mankind. "A *star*, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came, and stood over where the young child was."

I shall not take up your time in proposing conjectures on the nature and form of this star. It was undoubtedly such, as might best answer the end in view; and probably far exceeded the other stars, to appearance, in magnitude and brightness; as it notified the birth of one, who was fairer than the children of men, on whom rested the spirit of grace and glory.

How just and how beautiful an emblem was such a star of the blessed person to whom it pointed! Celestial in its original; framed of the purest materials; admitting no dross and baseness into its composition; without spot, or the shadow of a cloud; shedding a lustre incapable of being sullied by the objects on which it fell, and passing through all things undefiled; moving above the world, though moving in it; placed in heaven, to give light upon the earth; rising in the east, but diffusing its glories to the west; the first-fruits of the day, the bright and the morning star, dispelling the shades, clearing skies, eclipsing the other luminaries, reigning alone and unrivalled in the firmament; from thence, not more bright than beneficial, exerting an influence, powerful, though silent and secret; directing and attracting men to the salvation it portended!*

The eastern Magi, as is evident from the text, understood, before they began their journey, that
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* See these particulars beautifully expanded and enlarged upon, by the admirable Dr South, in a discourse upon Rev. xxii. 16. "I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star." Vol. iii. Sermon. vii.

the star which they saw did by its appearance indicate the birth of "the King of the Jews," that is of the person foretold and expected, under that character, among the people of God. They understood, that this person, though stiled "King of the *Jews*," would accept the oblations of the *Gentiles*, and extend to them the blessings of his reign. They understood, as it should seem, that he was more than man; "We have seen *his* star in the east, and are come to *worship* him." By what means is it likely they should have attained this knowledge?

It is certain, that at the period when these things happened, and for some time preceding it, a general expectation of a ruler to arise in Judea prevailed all over the world. Suetonius, not to mention other historians, expressly tells us, that an ancient and uninterrupted opinion had prevailed *in all the east*, that at that time (namely, at the beginning of the last Jewish war) it was decreed by the fates, that some coming out of Judea should obtain the sovereignty. And no wonder, as a learned writer well observes, that such an opinion should be propagated throughout the east, when we consider the vast number of Jews, which were spread over all the eastern countries. In the reign of Ahasuerus, or Artaxerxes Longimanus, the Jews were dispersed throughout all the provinces of the Persian monarchy, and that, in numbers sufficient to defend themselves against their enemies in those provinces and many of the people of the land also, as we read in the book of Esther, became Jews. After the Babylonish captivity, the Jews increased so mightily, that we find them not only throughout Asia, but in Africa, and in many cities and islands of Europe, mentioned in the second chapter of the Acts.

Acts. Wherever they dwelt, they made many proselytes to their religion; and in their attempts to this purpose, they must very much spread the expectation of the Messiah's coming; an article so important in itself, and so flattering to their national vanity. These opportunities of being informed of the approaching Advent of the great King, the Magians of the east enjoyed in common with many other people. To which it may be added, that Zoroaster, the famous reformer of the Magian sect, is generally said to have been by extraction a Jew, and to have lived as a servant with one of the prophets, probably Daniel; he was well acquainted with the writings of Moses, and has inserted in his book many particulars from them.

Now, if we suppose the minds of men, of learned men more especially, to have been in this manner prepared, and rendered attentive to what happened, the sudden appearance of a new star in the heavens, super-eminent in splendor, and pointing towards Judea, might, perhaps, even without any farther information, be construed by them as a sign that the long looked for Prince and Saviour was actually born.

If we farther suppose, that the famous prediction, delivered in the mountains of the east, by Balaam, a prophet of their own, who, having his eyes opened, saw, and mentioned, so many ages before its appearance, "the star that should arise out of Jacob, the sceptre that should come out of Israel;"* if we suppose, I say, that this famous prediction was carefully preserved, and handed down from one generation to another, we would most probably be the case, it doubtless might have lent its assistance at this time, and upon this occasion.

As

* Numbers xxi. 17.

But after all, when we consider, that every circumstance relative to the birth of Christ was, and must needs be, extraordinary and supernatural, full of wonder, and full of mystery; when we reflect on the journey and oblations of these sages, thus representing, as it were, the whole heathen world, now at length returning to the acknowledgement and adoration of its Redeemer, who should have been all along an object of faith to the nations, as well as to the Jews; why should we not conclude, that as an angel accompanied the glory that shone round the Jewish shepherds, and proclaimed to them the nativity of Jesus; so some beneficent spirit was enjoined to communicate to these Gentile philosophers the same gracious and comfortable intelligence. This, however, we may most assuredly conclude, that he who hung out the star in the firmament, visible to their outward eyes, took care that it should not be hung out in vain; but that some attendant light should at the same time shine inward, and irradiate their minds with the knowledge of its signification and import.

The fact is clear. They saw, they understood, they set out. No distance, no difficulties, no dangers, were sufficient to deter them. They passed the rocks and sands of the deserts, "the tents of Kedar," and "the hills of the robbers." Children of the faith of Abraham, they left their own country, obeying the heavenly call. Led by the star, as the Israelites of old by the pillar of fire, they pursued their way through the wilderness to the land of Promise, there to seek him, "in whom all the promises of God," made to the Gentiles, as well as to the Jews, "were yea and amen."

Arrived at Jerusalem, they imparted the glad tidings to those from whom they should have received

them. Neither afraid of Herod, nor ashamed of Messiah, they professed openly the occasion of their journey. They believed, and therefore they spake. "Where is he that is born king of the Jews?" To you, O ye rulers and teachers in Israel, we apply ourselves. You must know the birth-place of the Redeemer. Saw ye him whom we seek? Tell us where we may find, and adore him.

Far other sentiments were excited, by this question in the breast of Herod. Human policy would not suffer him to hear of a king, without thinking of a rival; and therefore he immediately projected a plan for the destruction of the new born prince.

For this end he summoned a council of the chief priests and elders, and demanded of them, where Christ should be born? Their lips were intended to preserve knowledge; and they did so. They answered, in Bethlehem of Judea; and cited their authority from the prophet Micah. They gave true information, and directed others aright, though they went not, themselves. Herod enquired concerning Christ, as many do concerning his religion, in order not to revere and obey, but to oppose and destroy.

The Magi, having now obtained the desired information, proceeded to Bethlehem; and lest their ardour should be damped by any doubt, lo the star which they saw in the east, and which, therefore, had disappeared for a time, again "went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was." The sight of their original and faithful monitor cheered their spirits, dispelling every anxious and uneasy thought. "When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy."

When their guide had conducted them to their journey's end, we read not that they were at all offended, or disconcerted, at the humble and lowly
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state in which they found the heaven-proclaimed king. The queen of Sheba came from far to hear the wisdom, and see the glory of Solomon. She accordingly heard his wisdom, and saw his glory; both beyond even her high raised expectation. These men came from far, to behold the king of the Jews. But in his appearance there was neither beauty, nor glory, that they should desire, or admire him. They saw, they heard nothing, but signs of poverty and weakness. Great, surely, was their faith; and greater, one is tempted to think, must have been their knowledge of the divine dispensations, than we are aware of. Where the star rested, there was the person whom they had been directed to seek. They therefore entered, and adored; and the Gentiles acknowledged him, whom the Jews disowned and rejected. They offered to him the richest productions of the country from whence they came; such things as were most precious, and of highest use and signification in ornamenting and exalting the services of the temple and altar. All they (says Isaiah) "from Sheba shall come; they shall bring gold and incense, and," by so doing, "they shall shew forth the praises of the Lord,"* while they thus devote themselves and their substance to his service. And since the eastern Magi, as hath been before observed, are upon this occasion to be considered by us as the delegates and deputies of the heathen world, the history of their journey and their oblations speaks the same language with that employed by St John in the Revelation, concerning the Christian church. "And the nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light of it; and the gates of it shall not be shut at all; and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it."†

Some

* Isai. lx. 6.

† Rev. xxi. 24.

Some reflections on the subject naturally offer themselves, in the way of *application*.

And first, Let us evermore, on this returning festival, give thanks unto our Lord God, for the revelation of that great mystery of mercy, the restoration of the Gentiles to the church, from which they had been, for so many ages, excluded; rather should we say, they had excluded themselves. The unhappy prodigal voluntarily left his father's house, the door of which was still open, whenever he should be disposed to return, and re-enter. But the time was long, ere he came to himself, and thought of being again received into the family of the faithful. No sooner was that the case, than the Father, as if he had all along been looking out in hope and expectation of his child, saw him while he was yet a great way off, ran to meet him, embraced him with a parent's tenderness, brought him into his house, made a feast for him, and commanded that no voice should be heard but that of joy and gladness, because he that had been lost was now found; he that had been dead was now alive again!—O sing unto the Lord a new song; sing unto the Lord, all the earth. Sing unto the Lord, bless his name; shew forth his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people. For the Lord is great and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nations are idols: but the Lord made the heavens. Honour and majesty are before him: strength and beauty are in his sanctuary!" *

Secondly, it may be remarked, that the persons who came as at this time to Bethlehem, were the learned of their country, men particularly addicted

to

to the sciences of philosophy and astronomy. They contemplated the heavens, and at length were favoured with the sight of a star, which led them to him who made the heavens, and who was then descended from on high, to perform a work still more wonderful. Man was formed with an understanding, for the attainment of knowledge; and happy is he, who is employed in the pursuit of it. Ignorance is in it's nature unprofitable; but every kind of knowledge may be turned to use. Diligence is generally rewarded with the discovery of that which it seeks after; sometimes, of that which is much more valuable. Human learning, with the blessing of God upon it, introduces us to divine wisdom; and while we study the works of nature, the God of nature will manifest himself to us; since, to a well tutored mind, "The heavens," without a miracle, "declare his glory, and the firmament sheweth his handy work."

Thirdly, from the example of the Magi, Let us learn to be very watchful and observant of those lights, which at sundry times and in divers manners are vouchsafed to us. At the last day, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, and the circumstances of our lives shall pass in review, it will then be seen, that God did not "leave himself without witness." It will appear, that the sinner had many calls, both from within, and from without, to which he might have hearkened; and to which if he had hearkened, they had been the means of correcting, instructing, and saving him. Above all things, how attentive should we be to the Scriptures, wherein are contained the words that must finally decide the fate of those who have them in their hands, and are capable of perusing them. In them shines, with pure and ever-increasing

ing lustre, the sure word of prophecy, pointing always from the beginning to the Saviour of mankind, and at last marking out the very place of his birth; like the star in the east, moving onward in its sphere, "till it came, and stood over, where the young child was." If we are not led by the one to seek after the Redeemer, surely they who set out for Judea, upon the evidence of the other, must rise up in the judgment against us, and condemn us.

Lastly, When we reflect upon the difficulties and dangers that lay in the way of these eastern sages, and the unremitting perseverance which vanquished them all, we shall blush at the remembrance of those trifling obstructions in our Christian course, which we have so often been tempted to deem insuperable. Our faith, once fixed on the basis of its proper evidence, should never be shaken by the cavils of sceptical and licentious men. For when there is great strength of argument set before us, if we refuse to do what appears most fit to be done till every little objection is removed that metaphysical refinement can invent, we shall never take one wise resolution, as long as we live. Let faith, therefore, have its perfect work; let it go on, conquering, and to conquer, till we have thereby compleatly overcome the world. Though Herod should be moved, and all Jerusalem with him, let us follow our heavenly conductor, and, rejoicing with exceeding great joy, proceed directly to Bethlehem. There, through meanness, poverty, and obscurity, let us discern the king of the Jews, give him the honour due unto his name, acknowledge and adore him, as our Lord, and our God. And since we are commanded not to appear before the Lord empty, let us bring presents, when we
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come into his courts. Let us offer to him of our substance, and the first fruits of our increase; let us offer to him of the true riches, with which he has blessed us; faith, tried, precious, resplendent, as *gold*; devotion, ascending from fervent affections, like the smoke of *frankincense* from the holy altar; love, peace, joy, and the other graces of sanctification, fragrant, cheering, and diffusive, like "*myrrh*, and aloes, with all the chief spices, and powders of the merchant." Let us offer to him our strength, our time, and our talents, our souls and bodies, all we have, all we are, to worship and obey him this day, and every day which it shall please him to add to our lives. With these dispositions and resolutions if we now come to his light, and haste to the brightness of his rising, we shall hereafter behold him in his meridian exaltation, when heaven and earth shall be full of the majesty of his glory; when, the last enemy being destroyed, he shall appear, as the "Prince of Peace," in a city that hath foundations; when all kings shall fall down before him, all nations shall serve him; when he shall reign for ever and ever, King of kings, and Lord of lords; when he shall receive, as his just and rightful tribute (the only tribute which can then be paid) the praises of his redeemed subjects, and the everlasting hallelujahs of the celestial choir, ascribing, as we now do, to him, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, all blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, might, majesty, and dominion, for ever and ever. And let all the people say, AMEN.

